

The truth about Sabah GLCs: Most exist for politicians and their families, forum told

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By: David Thien

Kota Kinabalu: Many GLCs continue to exist in Sabah despite losing millions of ringgit year after year because they take care of certain politicians and their families, a forum on good governance was told.

Former Sabah Law Society President Datuk Roger Chin told the Sabah Action Body Advocating Rights (Sabar) Town Hall session:

“Let’s not beat around the bush. Let’s not hide the facts. We have directors who are all politically connected. We have chairmen who are politically connected.

“The chairperson has got very little power, the board of directors run the show in most. But in Sabah, the chairmanship is the biggest position. This is reality.

“How is it that non-performing GLCs are still there year after year, and worse these people are still there making full use of their entitlements despite the huge losses.”

For the record, Sabah has some 200 GLCs and most are underperforming in relation to their assets.

For instance, although Sawit Kinabalu has nearly 200,000 hectares under oil palm, the returns to the state for decades has been said to be not what it should be due to “internal leakages”.

Another is Sedco and Khazanah Sabah, both of which recently saw the appointment of new chairmen by the State Government in the hope of turning things around.

Cement Industries Sabah, one of Sedco’s subsidiaries, for instance, have been registering losses or only meagre profits also for decades despite the countless construction projects taking place throughout the state.

“That’s terrible. In any company that is not performing, it should be closed down. But in our GLC ecosystem, the reality is that the full perks are still exploited.”

Roger said closing down these loss-making GLCs and their Anak Syarikat (subsidiaries) is also easier said than done.

He questioned why the directors of these non-performing GLCs are allowed to enjoy their perks such as staying in top hotels and flying Business Class when their companies are losing millions of tax payers’ monies.

“They pick the highest limit or limitless perk entitlements when the company is losing funds.”

He said this also happens in non-profit agencies of the State Government. They maximise their perk entitlements although it is a non-profit entity.”

He said the many consultants that these GLCs hire to give them beautiful plans often end up gathering dust.

He said at the change of every government, there would be a change of personnel and U-turns in policy plans. Investors would be told they could do such and such but when a change of government happened, there would be cancellation of the previously approved plans.

He said by right what had been decided and planned should be allowed to continue even though there is a change in administration, what should be rightly done is to improve on what was planned and implemented.

He said good governance is more than just GLCs.

“We should have a Procurement Act. Investors in many countries around the world would ask: ‘Do you have a Procurement Act?’ Transparency is important. “Good governance is important in politics as well. You must have laws like the Political Funding Act.

“When billions or millions of ringgit are involved, it is hard to believe that there is no quid pro quo.

“When it becomes quid pro quo, it becomes corruption. But, of course, they will never tell you that. “They will tell you it is political funding,” he said at the Kota Kinabalu Wetlands Ramsar Site meeting hall.

Chin said the proposed Political Funding Act is an appropriate law to force good governance ethics in political practice on those in public office leadership roles.

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Unit 1-2R, Beverly Hill Plaza, Mile 6, Jalan Bundusan, 88300 Penampang
P O Box 10126, 88801 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah
Tel: (60) 1116005366 Email: sabar.secretariat@gmail.com



"Sabah Voices to Action - Shaping Sabah's Future Together" is a citizen-driven, non-partisan initiative running from March to June 2025, dedicated to amplifying Sabahans' voices, fostering meaningful discussions, and shaping policies on education, healthcare, public infrastructure, and good governance.

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The truth about Sabah GLCs

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Jasmin (centre) showing the syabu seized at the Tawau Airport.

RM87,000 syabu intercepted in Tawau

JAMIN AHMAD
TAWAU: A syndicate's attempt to smuggle methamphetamine (syabu) worth RM87,000 for the local market via commercial flights was foiled after authorities intercepted the drugs at Tawau Airport on Saturday.

Two men were arrested - the first a 44-year-old man from Perak and the second a 25-year-old from Sarawak.

Tawau District Police Chief ACP Jasmin Hussin said police recovered about 2.5kg of syabu following inspections and interrogations of both suspects.

"We suspect they tried to deceive authorities by arriving separately on different flights from Kuala Lumpur International Airport. The first suspect was detained at 9.25pm, while the second was arrested about 50 minutes later," he told

a press conference at the Tawau District Police Headquarters, Tuesday.

Jasmin said a search on the first suspect led to the discovery of a commercial flight boarding pass and a vacuum-sealed cylinder suspected of being used to pack drug-filled plastic.

Inspection on the second suspect's luggage uncovered syabu hidden inside a biscuit box, instant noodle packaging and food-mixing materials.

"We also confiscated three smartphones, two luggage bags (red and black), a vacuum-sealed cylinder and a water bottle from both suspects for further investigation," he said.

Jasmin said the first suspect had two prior cases under Section 398 of the Dangerous Drugs Act (DDA) 1952 and two cases under Section 15(1) of the same Act.

A urine test found the suspect positive for methamphetamine and amphetamine.

"The second suspect tested negative but has a past record under Section 7(2) of the Common Gaming Houses Act 1953 and Section 420 of the Penal Code (wanted)," he said.

Jasmin believes a drug syndicate orchestrated the suspects' movements, given their separate arrivals and the method of concealing the drugs.

He noted that similar modus operandi are commonly used by experienced drug syndicates and police are working to track down others involved.

"Based on past cases, drug syndicates not only prefer smuggling syabu into Tawau via land and sea but also through airports (air routes)," he said.