

Purpose Sabah GLCs set up defeated

Published on Daily Express: Monday, June 09, 2025

By: David Thien

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If successful, they could be listed on Bursa Malaysia to raise development funds.

That was the ideal situation envisioned by former Chief Minister Tan Sri Harris Salleh when he initiated the set-up of many Sabah GLCs during the Berjaya administration.

Subsequent Sabah Governments proliferated many more GLCs, with little consideration of their economic purposes or roles. Mostly to give perks to political warlords and cronies.

Good governance was thrown out of the window.

The result is some 250 GLCs today, most of which are poorly managed and bleeding millions of ringgit.

The present State Government's placement of more professionals in the management of GLCs in an attempt to reform and turn around loss-making GLCs is in the right direction, according to retired banker Datuk John Lo.

He shared his opinions in a "Sabah Voices to Action" podcast with former Sabah Law Society President Datuk Roger Chin with Kopi Tiam Council hosts Adi and Haffisz organised by NGO Sabar recently on "Economic Imperative on Stringent Governance for Sabah's GLCs".

"I always feel we Sabahans are our biggest enemies because people who have been put in trust are not doing their job," Lo said Harris used GLCs to propel the boom during the Berjaya government, instead of just using government departments.

"One of the main reasons being GLCs are very private sector driven and should be able to help Sabah develop faster. During his (Harris) time, the GLCs generally speaking did a very good job.

"There was a big boom." Lo, who is an advisor to the State government in his role in the Sabah Economic Advisory Council (SEAC) and in the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

Lo recalled how Harris started a number of GLCs when he became Chief Minister. Harris' intention was that these GLCs would help to expedite the development of Sabah.

To a large extent, Harris succeeded. Sabah became No. 2 state in Malaysia, after Selangor. Since he left office, Sabah has become No.2 from the bottom.

Some of the GLCs that Harris created include Sabah Gas, Sabah Energy, Sabah Methanol, Asean Supply Base, Sabah Air, Sabah Forest Industries (SFI), Tanjong Aru Beach Hotel or TABH [now Shangri-La Tanjong Aru Resort], Labuan ShipYard, Sabah Hot Briquetted Iron, KPI, SUDC, Sabah Cement Industries.

Significantly, Harris also gave birth to three financial institutions – Sabah Development Bank, Sabah Bank and Sabah Finance. Unique because no other state has ever been granted approval for three financial institutions bearing the name of the state.

GLCs dominate every important economic sector in Sabah. GLCs are in effective control of many natural resources: mining/minerals [SMM], timber and FMU [Innoprise, Safoda].

“The GLCs have been given the most valuable lands in Kota Kinabalu. All the commercial lands were given to the GLCs for a mere RM1,000.

“And then they go and JV (joint venture) with somebody and today a particular GLC is insolvent, instead of making billions. The GLCs are in control of a lot of our assets from oil palm plantations which are worth in the billions, with monopolies like Cement Sabah etc.

“Every aspect of our economic life, we have some GLCs involved,” Lo revealed.

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"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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Together, we can build a stronger, more inclusive Sabah!

PETALING JAYA: The government's move to collect detailed phone and Internet usage records from telecommunications companies has crossed the line and is a breach of the people's right to privacy, says MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong (pic).

He argued that such detailed data collection is unnecessary for policymaking in the information, communications and technology (ICT) and tourism sectors, as claimed by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC).

"This is not about whether we trust the current government. The real question is: why does the government need such detailed information about its citizens?" Dr Wee asked in a Facebook post.

"Today, it's for analysing tourism statistics, but who knows what it will be used for tomorrow?"

"If the aim is to count tourists or active broadband users, aggregate data is more than sufficient. There's no need for personal data."

It was previously reported that, according to industry sources, the government had instructed local telcos in April to hand over detailed call and Internet usage logs for the first quarter of the year under a so-called "Mobile Phone Data" project.

The data requested reportedly included call logs and IP call records, as well as precise location information, including latitude and longitude.

Telcos were also warned that failure to comply would constitute an offence under

the Communications and Multimedia Act, which carries a fine of up to RM100,000 or imprisonment for up to 10 years.

MCMC has since clarified that the data is intended to support evidence-based policymaking in the ICT and tourism sectors. The commission also stressed that the data would be anonymised before submission, with no personally identifiable information included.

"In both cases, no individual subscriber can be identified through the data collected," MCMC said in a statement. However, Dr Wee remained unconvinced, warning that anonymised data, when combined with other data points, could still be traced back to individuals.

"If you're collecting data on who we call, how long the calls last, our IP addresses, and our exact location at specific times and dates, then it's very easy for someone with access to this data to piece it together and uncover our identities," he said.

Dr Wee also pointed out that cross-referencing data from mobile apps like MySejahtera, e-wallets, CCTV footage, Touch 'n Go, and banking records would further erode individual privacy.

MCMC also claimed that extensive engagement with telcos over the past two years had taken place to ensure the safe transfer of data, a claim Dr Wee challenged.

"If everything was agreed upon and safely in place, why the need to issue threats to telcos?" he asked.

Ultimately, Dr Wee said, the issue transcends politics and is about protecting the rights of Malaysians.

"Our personal data doesn't belong to any government, not the one today, tomorrow or those to come."

"When a government starts collecting such detailed data, it has already crossed a line."

"The people must speak up. Our data is not a plaything." - The Star



Telco data request crosses the line: Wee

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Meant for stats, not surveillance, assures Fahmi

THE Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission's (MCMC) request for mobile phone call data from telecommunications companies is aimed at supporting evidence-based policymaking, including enhancing network infrastructure, Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil said.

He said the requested data does not include identities or any information that could be used to identify individuals.

"The purpose is to collect data for the official statistics of the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM). It does not contain any personal information but focuses on trends to enable us to gather more detailed information about quality, engagement levels and the number of users in specific mukims (sub-districts) or districts."

"Currently, much of the information about the telecommunications sector remains too general," he told reporters at the Lembah Pantai Umno's Perpaduan sacrificial ritual ceremony here yesterday in conjunction with the Aidiladha celebration.

He said this new, more detailed approach will enable the government to assess the actual needs of the public and bridge the digital divide more effectively.

"We have also begun shifting from providing general information to focusing on Coverage of Populated Areas (COPA)."

"This ensures that the data collected under DOSM will enable more planning and