

## Improving education infra in remote areas among priorities

Published on Daily Express: Tuesday, April 08, 2025

By: David Thien

Kota Kinabalu: The Sabah Infrastructure Development Plan 2025 should prioritise upgrading dilapidated schools, expanding digital connectivity and increasing boarding facilities to ensure consistent education for students in remote areas, according to Prof. Vincent Pang of UMS.

“Improvements should also extend to enhancing sanitation facilities, ensuring students have access to clean water and providing electricity through renewable energy sources such as solar panels to support digital learning tools,” he said.

This was highlighted in Sabah Action Body Advocating Rights (Sabar) and Kopitiam Council Podcast’s second episode of “Voices to Action” on March 21.

Pang and Datuk Mohd Hanafiah bin Mohd Kassim, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation spoke to hosts Adi and Haffisz.

Building mobile classrooms in areas with difficult access can also improve learning opportunities for isolated communities.

These mobile units should be equipped with modern educational resources, internet connectivity and adaptable learning spaces that cater to children of varying age groups and educational needs.

Mobile teachers can also be assigned to accompany these classrooms to ensure students receive dedicated instruction tailored to their unique learning challenges.

“Improving rural transport networks would further reduce commuting challenges for both students and teachers. Developing safer roads, expanding waterway connections for coastal villages and introducing dedicated school transport services can improve attendance rates and provide students with safer, more reliable access to education,” Prof. Vincent said.

He said financial hardships make it difficult for families to afford essentials like uniforms, transportation and stationeries.

This financial strain often forces children to leave school prematurely to support their families. For some families, investing in education is viewed as a secondary priority when faced with the immediate need for food, shelter and other basic necessities.

He recalled a 2019 Unicef Malaysia study which identified economic hardship as the leading factor preventing children from continuing their education.

Many families rely on children to assist with household chores, care for younger siblings, or contribute financially to the family.

This situation is particularly prevalent in rural farming and fishing communities, where children may be expected to help tend crops, fish, or other economic activities.

“In such cases, children’s education becomes secondary to economic survival. Additionally, indirect costs such as extracurricular expenses and digital learning tools further strain already struggling households, making continued schooling an unrealistic goal for some families.

“Economic hardship also has a noticeable impact on nutrition, which in turn affects students’ cognitive development and concentration in class.

“Many children in rural areas experience inadequate and unbalanced diets long before they start school, and this malnutrition hinders their academic performance,” he said.

= END =

---

**"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.

**Join the Movement:**

<https://www.sabar.org.my/action/#join-movement>

**Podcast Channel:**

<https://youtube.com/@kopitiamcouncil>

**Contact and Follow Us:**

**Website:** <https://sabar.org.my/action/>

**Email:** [action@sabar.org.my](mailto:action@sabar.org.my)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/sabar.org](https://facebook.com/sabar.org)

**Instagram:** [@sabar.org.my](https://instagram.com/sabar.org.my)

**TikTok:** [@sabar.org.my](https://tiktok.com/@sabar.org.my)

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

dailyexpress

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2023

Local | 3

Focusing on sustainable forestry practices and biodiversity conservation

## Incorporating agroforestry with timber plantation trees

**SANDAKAN:** The Sabah Forestry Department (SFD) and the Sawit Kinabalu Group announced their collaboration on the establishment of a Forest Seed Garden (FSG) at the Sg. Pin Conservation Area (SPCA) in Kinabatangan.

The handing over of the Letter of Intent for this project was held at the Forestry Headquarters in Sandakan, here, Monday.

Chief Conservator of Forests, Datuk Frederick Kugan, said, this partnership aims to develop an agroforestry model incorporating timber plantation trees, with a focus on sustainable forestry practices and biodiversity conservation.

He added, the initial phase of the project will involve research to evaluate cost efficiency and optimal plantation practices, including fertilizer treatments and mulching, methods for enhancing timber growth.

The study will provide valuable insights into the viability of agroforestry systems for timber production in Sabah.

Under SFD, research work will be undertaken by the Forest Plantation Programme of the Forest Research Centre while for Sawit Kinabalu, it will be carried out by the Conservation and Biodiversity Unit.



Kugan (center right) and the Group Managing Director of Sawit Kinabalu Group, Datuk Victor Ationg (center left), with the signed Letter of Intent by both parties on the initiative, together with other officials at the handing over ceremony.

"This is an exciting endeavour and an important project, as the two parties start to work towards the goal of establishing a sustainable model that can be replicated," He told on a statement, here, Monday.

Work on the project is already underway, with a total of six plots established as part of the initial phase.

Later this year, both parties plan to hold an in-house workshop to discuss progress and begin planning for the next

phase of the project in 2026.

"It is hoped that the research will not only contribute to a deeper understanding of agroforestry systems but also highlight the financial potential of such initiatives," He added.

They aim to create a scalable model that can be scaled and serve as a blueprint for other organizations seeking to implement similar sustainable practices in the future.

### PM congratulates Syrian president on new govt

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has congratulated Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa on the formation of Syria's new government.

In a Facebook post yesterday, Anwar said Malaysia is committed to strengthening bilateral ties, particularly in the economic sector, and is ready to encourage Malaysian companies to invest in and contribute to Syria's reconstruction efforts.

"President al-Sharaa has also invited me to visit Syria as part of efforts to further enhance cooperation between the two countries," he added.

On March 26, Syria officially announced its new Cabinet line-up, with al-Sharaa affirming the government's commitment to rebuilding national institutions based on accountability and transparency, according to Anadolu Ajansi.

Previously, an interim government led by Prime Minister Mohammed al-Bashir was appointed for three months after the Bashar al-Assad regime was overthrown by anti-regime forces led by al-Sharaa last December.

Al-Sharaa was subsequently named transitional President at the end of January.

Assad, who ruled Syria for nearly 25 years, fled to Russia after anti-regime

### PBDS files police complaint over misuse of party name

**KUCHING:** Parti Barisan Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) has lodged a complaint to the police pertaining to individuals who have used the party's name to cast aspersions against the Sarawak government.

In a press statement, PBDS information chief, Andrew Bugie Ipang (pic), said that the party's name was used in a Facebook post in relation to an allegation from the federal government for disaster relief in Sarawak and Sabah.

He said that the culprits are neither authorised nor sanctioned to use the party's name.

At the same time, he also informed the public that the party does not have a website or any social media accounts such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, or X (Twitter).

"This serves to inform those involved that the party's supreme council had lodged a complaint with the police and relevant authorities against those responsible individuals or perpetrators involved," he said.

The post, which was made on April 4 on a Facebook page called 'Julau Update' by an anonymous participant, attached



what appeared to be an infographic with a picture of Premier Datuk Patingli Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg with text beneath it claiming that PBDS has urged the Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) government to channel flood aid to victims in the State.

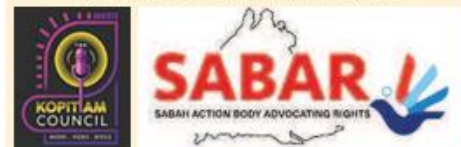
Accompanying the infographic was a text by the anonymous person who claimed that the aid had been handed over in February, but there has been no response from the Sarawak government to flood victims, hoping that the flood aid was not misused.

On January 31, Prime Minister Datu Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced an allocation of approximately RM25 million for the immediate relief of infrastructure, livelihoods and services by landslides, landslides, and fires in Sabah and Sarawak.

Anwar also stated that the allocation includes immediate assistance of RM1,000 for all families affected. - DayakDaily



(From left) Adi, Prof. Pang, Mohd Haniffah and and Haffiz.



### Improving education infra in remote areas among priorities

**David Thien**

**KOTA KINABALU:** The Sabah Infrastructure Development Plan 2025 should prioritise upgrading dilapidated schools, expanding digital connectivity and increasing boarding facilities to ensure consistent education for students in remote areas, according to Prof. Vincent Pang of UMS.

Improvements should also extend to enhancing sanitation facilities, ensuring students have access to clean water and providing electricity through renewable energy sources such as solar panels to support digital learning tools," he said.

This was highlighted in Sabah Action Body Advocating Rights (Sabar) and Kopitiam Council Podcast's second episode of "Voices to Action" on March 21.

Pang and Datuk Mohd Haniffah bin Mohd Kassim, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation spoke to hosts Adi and Haffiz.

Building mobile classrooms in areas with difficult access can also improve learning opportunities for isolated communities.

These mobile units should be equipped with modern educational resources, internet connectivity and adaptable learning spaces that cater to children of varying age groups and educational needs.

Mobile teachers can also be assigned to accompany these classrooms to ensure students receive dedicated instruction tailored to their unique learning challenges.

Improving transport networks would further reduce commuting challenges for both students and teachers. Developing safer roads, expanding waterway connections for coastal villages and introducing dedicated school transport services can improve attendance rates

and provide students with safer, more reliable access to education," Prof. Vincent said.

He said financial hardships make it difficult for families to afford essentials like uniforms, transportation and stationeries.

This financial strain often forces children to leave school prematurely to support their families. For some families, investing in education is viewed as a secondary priority when faced with the immediate need for food, shelter and other basic necessities.

He recalled a 2019 Unicef Malaysia study which identified economic hardship as the leading factor preventing children from continuing their education.

Many families rely on children to assist with household chores, care for younger siblings, or contribute financially to the family.

This situation is particularly prevalent in rural farming and fishing communities, where children may be expected to help tend crops, fish, or other economic activities.

"In such cases, children's education becomes secondary to economic survival. Additionally, indirect costs such as extracurricular expenses and digital learning tools further strain already struggling households, making continued schooling an unrealistic goal for some families."

"Economic hardship also has a noticeable impact on nutrition, which in turn affects students' cognitive development and concentration in class."

"Many children in rural areas experience inadequate and unbalanced diets long before they start school, and this malnutrition hinders their academic performance," he said.