

# Sarawak attractive to investors

BY NG KIANG CHIEW

**KUCHING:** Sarawak's unique advantages make it conducive for setting up business ventures, according to Deputy Chief Minister cum Minister of Tourism and Heritage/Industrial Development, Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Dr George Chan Hong Nam.

"Our lands are cheaper, so is the labour cost. We have very good land for fishery projects and have abundant natural resources, including fish. With the SCORE (Sarawak Corridor Of Renewable Energy) project, we have big businesses coming in. All these, among others, are our comparative advantages as compared to Sabah and West Malaysia," he told reporters after officiating at a Business Promotion & Investment Forum event at a leading hotel here.

Chan also informed that besides the aluminium plant project many other potential projects for Sarawak were in the final stages of confirmation.

"A US\$1 billion solar panel will be built here in Kuching,"

he disclosed. He added that the gas pipe-line project from Sabah to Sarawak "is still ongoing."

Chan also disclosed that the government wanted to carry out a study to help minimize transportation costs for Sarawakians and he would be seeking feedback and suggestions on the matter.

In order to help SMIs (small and-medium size industries), Chan said the government was keen to reduce the electricity cost. He said SESCO's capacity was supposed to hit 5,000 megawatt only by 2020 and, presently, it was less than 1,000 megawatt.

"But we can't wait until 2020. So meanwhile, I will see what I can do to try to reduce this capital cost," he said during a dialogue with various industry leaders.

He also mentioned about the shortage of industrial land, saying the 300 hectares of such land in the Samarahan area were not sufficient for use by various industries there. Meanwhile, Chan said, "I have asked for RM500 million in the next Malaysia plan. So



**DR GEORGE** Chan (centre) chairing the business forum. With him are (from right) Ministry of Industrial Development permanent secretary Datuk Liaw Soon Eng, SCCI president Datuk Abang Abdul Karim Tun Openg, Asso. Prof Annie Wong from UiTM, and Dr George Ngui from SwinBurne University of Technology. PHOTO: JOHN CHAN

every year, we will add another RM100 million worth of infrastructure for these industrial lands. That should cover the most of the needs. We have Samarahan's RM100 million for next year." He added that more industrial lands would be allocated for other parts of the state in due course.

Chan also answered questions on how to boost rural

tourism industry, the need for faster halal certification process that would benefit the halal food industry, and on the effort to improve efficiency at the ports. He said relevant studies would be carried out to see how to lower costs and improve efficiency in all business operations involved in the various fields.

During the function,

Professor Anne Wong of the University of Technology MARA (UiTM), Sarawak, briefed the audience on "The Final Report On The Cost Of Doing Business In Sarawak". The one-day Forum event was jointly organised by the Ministry of Industrial Development Sarawak (MIDS) and Sarawak Chamber of Commerce and Industry

(SCCI).

Later, referring to the ongoing fogging operations, Chan told reporters that he had instructed the relevant departments "to go all out to search and destroy the mosquitoes, so that they can't multiply."

Meanwhile, SCCI president, Datuk Abang Haji Abdul Karim Tun Abang Haji Openg

told the forum participants that MIDS and SCCI had set up a data bank on SCORE. Interested people may contact the unit for more information. On halal certification, Karim said the government has to comply with international standards.

"We cater to a RM3 billion market. So, our standard has to be competitive," he said.