

Headline	Raising Penan livelihood		
MediaTitle	The Star (Kuching)		
Date	16 May 2014	Color	Black/white
Section	NEWS	Circulation	9,905
Page No	S4	Readership	29,715
Language	English	ArticleSize	234 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 1,291
Frequency	Daily (EM)	PR Value	RM 3,873



Raising Penan livelihood

Govt to step up community's involvement in meaningful programmes

KUCHING: The state government will continue to engage and work with the Penan community so that they can participate in more meaningful development like other communities.

Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Alfred Jabu said in the long run this would lead them to participate in activities to improve their income and raise their standards of living.

"Some of these programmes include providing them with knowledge and skills through training and study tours related to agriculture, educational assistance for higher learning, creating economic opportunities as well as extending food assistance," he told the State Legislative Assembly in his winding-up speech yesterday.

One such programme is the rubber planting project at Long Beruang which started last year with 70 participants, who will benefit from it when the crop reaches maturity in 2018.

"By then, it is expected that each of the participants would be able to earn an income well above the poverty line," Jabu said, adding that pre-implementation planning was now being undertaken

in Long Jekitan and Long Latei for rubber mini-estates to start next year.

He said another programme to be implemented this year was the food basket programme following a pilot project in Long San, Long Keluan and Lusong Laku last year.

Through collaboration with MyKasih Foundation, the programme will be extended to more villages where more than 700 Penans are expected to receive the assistance this year.

In addition, Jabu said the Federal Government had agreed to fund a project to purchase and supply roofing materials for house repairs for the Penan.

This programme is expected to kick off by the middle of this year and benefit over 300 families from nine villages in the Patah and Akah areas of Baram.

He also said a new rural service centre (RSC) was completed in Long Lamai last November and another at Long Jekitan scheduled to be completed by the end of this year.

"The implementation of development projects and programmes to assist the Penan community will be planned and coordinated around these rural service

centres.

"The newly-completed RSCs will soon operate like RSC Long Beruang. The component of childhood education will start in July this year when the teachers have completed their training at Kemas training centre.

"These trainee teachers are recruited from the Penan villages near the RSCs. Enrolment of kindergarten students has been completed by Kemas in the first quarter of this year."

Jabu also said the Penan were more aware of the importance of education, as reflected by the increasing number of Penan graduates with diplomas and degrees which now numbered almost 60.

Further, he said more were now studying in institutions of higher learning while the number of Penan students in primary and secondary schools statewide was above 3,000.

"In other aspects, their involvement in settled farming and commercial agriculture is gaining momentum, especially in smallholders' oil palm and high-yielding rubber planting.

"Others are actively involved in making and trading handicrafts for domestic and international markets," he added.