

Stronger Czech-Sabah relations with honorary consulate set up

By DK RYNI QAREENA

KOTA KINABALU: The setting up of the Czech Republic honorary consulate here is timely as it will strengthen the relationship and interaction between Czechs and Sabahans.

The state government of Sabah fully supports it.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Musa Haji Aman said this at the official opening of the Czech Republic honorary consulate in Sabah held at the Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort here last night. The text of his speech was read by Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Raymond Tan Shu Kiah.

Musa congratulated Vincent Tan on his appointment as the honorary consul of the Czech Republic.

"I have known him (Vincent Tan) for many years and I know he is capable of discharging his duties as expected," he added.

And, the Chief Minister also welcomed the Czech Republic's Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Martin Tlapa and his entourage to Sabah.

On the economic and business front, he said Sabah has undergone tremendous development in the past few years and that the state has seen an increase in foreign tourist arrivals, robust economic and business activities particularly in the areas of infrastructure development, downstream processing of palm oil, renewable energy and more recently green technologies.

"I am pleased to learn from the Mr Martin Tlapa that Czech Republic is strong in the fields of green technology, alternative energy sources, water and waste management, as well as advanced technologies for agri-

culture and food processing.

"These are all relevant sectors which Sabah is interested in and we can explore the possibility of collaboration between Czech and Sabah companies in these sectors," Musa said, adding that the setting up of the honorary consulate would facilitate and boost such ventures.

Meanwhile, he shared that Sabah was popularly known as "The Land Below the Wind" as the state was geographically located below the typhoon zone.

"We are to some extent spared from the full destructive force of typhoons and at the same time, Sabah is also endowed with some of the most iconic landscapes, wildlife and plants, which the state government is committed to protect and preserve," he added.

He also said Mount Kinabalu, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was just less than two hours drive from Kota Kinabalu.

"There are beautiful marine parks within 15 minutes from the city centre. And, we are also home to nature destinations both on land and at sea all over Sabah, such as Maliau Basin, which I understand the Ambassador (Rudolf Kykl) has visited, the Sipadan Island and the Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre, just to name a few.

The Chief Minister added that Czech Republic was a country rich in culture and tradition and that was sure there would be more opportunities for cultural exchanges with the setting up of the honorary consulate.

"I am looking forward to more interaction between the Czech people and our Sabahans. I believe this will foster better understanding between our people and in a small but significant way contribute to world peace and international understanding," he said.