

## S'wak govt aims to gazette one million hectares of land as Totally Protected Areas by 2020

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Taib (third left) officiates STIDC 45th anniversary dinner while Ragad (second left), Abang Johari (second right), Juma'ani (third right), Awang Tengah (left) and Assistant Minister for Entrepreneur and Small, Medium Enterprise (SME) Development Datuk Naroden Majais look on. KUCHING: The Sarawak government will continue to enhance its forest management policies and action plans in making sure that the state timber industry remains relevant in the ever changing domestic and global needs.

KUCHING: The Sarawak government aims to continue to place high importance on conservation within the state with one million hectares of land being gazetted as Totally Protected Areas by 2020.

Under the state land use policy, the forestry sector is also allocated with six million hectares for the purpose of Permanent Forest Estates (EPF) in managing the state economic activities such as timber industry and eco-tourism more sustainably.

Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg stressed that the Sarawak government has also made it mandatory for all long-term forest licenses to be certified under the Sustainable Forest Management by 2022.

“As of today, I am glad that there are already six forest management units with a total area of about 561,703 hectares have been certified,” said Abang Johari during the Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation (STIDC) 45th anniversary dinner at Borneo Convention Centre Kuching here which was officiated by the Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud last night.

The forest certification will strengthen Sarawak Legality Verification System, a widely accepted system internationally in countries which require proof of legality endorsement such as Japan, Australia and Korea.

Since 1997, the state government had also issued 43 Industrial Forest Plantation (IFP) licenses as another source of raw material to support the development of the timber industry.

The harvesting of the industrial forest plantation in Sarawak in 2011 had led to a log production of 44,000 cubic metres and it further increased to 1.72 million cubic metres in 2018.

With a target planting area of one million hectares by 2020 under the IFP, the Sarawak government had extended the timeline to the year 2025 in view of the slow planting progress with 420,146 hectares being planted as of date.

On the digital economy front, he said that he has directed more emphasis in improving the state digital infrastructure as businesses can utilise digital technology to conduct business transaction, product promotions and data management.

Being aware that innovative and productive workforce is the key in remaining competitive in this challenging industry, he was glad that STIDC had initiated the Pool of Young Designers Programme (POYOD) to produce designers for the growth of the furniture industry.

“The participation of these young designers in trade exhibitions in India, Australia and Dubai last year had generated a potential sales of RM47 million worth of furniture,” he said.

As such, he looks forward to STIDC establishing a design centre in Sarawak as a platform for young designers to expand their design capabilities.

Among those attended were Taib’s wife Toh Puan Datuk Patinggi Ragad Kurdi Taib, Abang Johari’s wife Datuk Amar Juma’ani Tuanku Bujang, Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan and Minister of Local Government and Housing Datuk Dr Sim Kui Hian.