

Sabah's jobless due to years of economic mismanagement

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On 23rd May 2022, the Daily Express banner-headlined "250,000 jobless youths seen" by 2024. As stated in this article, Sabah's unemployment is about three times higher than national average. This is very serious. The reality is even more frightening when added to this context

[a] The unemployed are Sabahan youths, their future is Sabah's destiny, potentially the most productive. Ignominious and very bad for the economy.

[b] Can be very damaging psychologically and socially for them to start life being unemployed.

[c] This 250,000 jobless youth will [if not already] create very serious long term social and economic consequences for Sabah.

[d] To add to this number are Sabahans who have been partially or permanently unemployed and under employed [especially Sabahans in the farming and coastal fishing communities].

<https://www.dailyexpress.com.my/news/192887/250-000-sabah-jobless-youths-seen/>
Sabah's unemployment is consequence of decades-old bad economic management.

Extremely irrational for Sabah, the richest resource state in Malaysia, to have the worst unemployment. This is a time bomb waiting to explode. Why this sorry state?

[a] Many political leaders have failed to manage the economy for the benefit of the average Sabahans, only to enrich a few and outsiders. Best examples are oil palm, oil and gas.

[b] The education system, especially at the tertiary level, has produced too many unemployable graduates. The "ivory tower" has little or no connect with reality of manpower needs in business/industry and pertinent values of initiatives and independence.

Sabah's many other economic problems.

Unemployment is only one. Many others [a] poor economic ownership by Sabahans.

[b] massive financial leakages.

[c] Inequitable federal economic development funding.

[d] Sabah natural resources enriching outsiders.

[e] poor infrastructure, logistics, connectivity.

[f] food sufficiency and food security.

[g] raging inflation and spiking food prices.

I can quite easily add a few more. Each of these is very critical and serious. The bottom-line message is this - Sabah's economy must be restructured and politicians' minds must be reset.

No quick panaceas.

Sabah's unemployment and other economic ills have been long in the making, some of them as old as 40 years.

[a] Sabah, under the constitution, has little or no say in fiscal and/or monetary policy decisions. Sabah is also unable to influence other federal economic policies that can produce jobs.

[b] Sabah's reserve is too small to be effective to solve unemployment of 250,000 Sabahans.

[c] Serious negligence by federal government on Sabah's economic development.

No one has the magic wand to wave away Sabah's unemployment and other economic dilemmas. The stark reality is that there are no quick panaceas to rectify Sabah's unemployment. Solution will

[a] take time, political will and plenty of courage.

[b] restructure the economy to create more Sabahan ownership and jobs, impose requirements of downstream and establishment of value chain. Sabah should never ever allow establishment of another oil palm industry which has generated no employment, no downstream, no value chain.

[c] establishment of economic policies that will benefit Sabahans.

Hajiji's initiatives to reset Sabah's economy.

The most effective solution to Sabah's unemployment and other economic problems is to restructure and expand the economy. These are the Herculean economic problems that Hajiji is trying to solve.

He set up his SMJ vision [Sabah Maju Jaya vision]. As its name implies, this vision is for all Sabahans to maju. Towards this end, he has initiated policies that

[a] he is the CM for all Sabahans.

[b] for inclusiveness, he has reached out to opposition leaders and urged them to become economic leaders for their constituents.

[c] Most importantly, the Sabah cabinet has prioritized the creation of jobs in it quests for investments.

[d] to expand the economy, he has intro-

duced investor friendly policies to attract investments.

[e] His commitment to "Sabahans first policy" will ensure Sabahans will benefit as much as possible from his investment drive and economic expansion.

Where will jobs come from?

Under Hajiji, Sabah is becoming increasingly assertive, coupled with proactive policies, in pursuing economic development and not waiting for the manna from federal government.

[a] Direct investment. Since taking over as CM in September 2020 [less than 2 years] more than RM25 billions [including RM19.8 billion at SMJ's 1st anniversary] have been signed on. This investment amount is a historical high and will generate many skilled and unskilled jobs.

[b] Hajiji has announced a major policy for ITP [Industrial Tree Plantations] and downstream industry. With its implementation 40,000 skilled and another 40,000 unskilled jobs will be created, RM12 billion contribution in Sabah's GDP and RM12 billion investment

[c] The government will launch Sabah's mining industry soon. This will create many thousands of jobs.

[d] Important developments are taking place in power generation. [i] The Sabah Energy Commission has already been formed to control and chart Sabah's power development. [ii] Hajiji has succeeded to reclaim 25pc of gas produced in Sabah from Petronas. This will be used to build additional and much needed power capacity and fuel for new industries.

[e] Hajiji has said the 250 GLCs will be revamped. If each revamped GLC can, on average employ 10 more skilled and 40 more unskilled, they will amount to 12,500. This is in addition to Hajiji's wish for each GLC to generate dividend of RM1 million.

[f] New industries being established in addition to the aforementioned ones are [i] silica [ii] silicon metal [iii] green energy including hydrogen, [iv] LNG to name a few.

[g] When Hajiji's initiatives have taken root, in addition to the aforementioned employment generators, the multiplier effects will produce numerous business and job opportunities for many young Sabahans.

[h] The resurgence of tourism.

In preparation, the young Sabahans who want to get on in life, should acquire some suitable skills which will equip them to grab the opportunities generated by MSJ.

<https://www.dailyexpress.com.my/news/189663/state-glcs-require-to-pay-at-least-rm1-million-dividend-annually/>

<https://www.thevibes.com/articles/business/57401/sabah-marks-with-smj-anniversary-with-rm19.8-bil-in-investment-deals>

All political leaders have responsibility to solve Sabah's economic problems.

Hajiji has started the ball rolling. The road ahead is difficult, Malaysia is being besieged by political and economic uncertainties, the world's economy is in a mess. Every political leader should contribute and add to Hajiji's efforts to rejuvenate Sabah's economy. Please stop the armchair critic/smart aleck antics. Petty political fights don't benefit Sabahans, can only drag all of us down further. So, please unite to create a better, more prosperous Sabah.

Sabah-Kalimantan borderland

Chun Sheng Goh and Bernard Ng

RECENTLY, the borderland issue has been gaining attention due to the arguments surrounding the construction of the CIQ complex in Serudong, Kalabakan district.

In March 2022, the Federal Finance Ministry decided to postpone the RM215 million project, citing "insufficient funding" as the main reason. The postponement has immediately attracted a storm of protest from the state government.

The Serudong CIQ complex held high hopes of eradicating Sabah and North Kalimantan smuggling activities, tighten the border security and reduce any unforeseen negative implications of illegal border crossing, such as containing Covid-19 infection.

Furthermore, the planned 39-km road connecting Kalabakan and Serudong may also catalyse the growth of the border town.

In the old days, the "borderland" refers to marginal territories that were not effectively managed by the sultanates/kingdoms due to difficulties in information flows. It may take days to travel between the capital and the borderland.

However, the label "borderland" should no longer presuppose marginality, especially in modern days.

In many cases, borders were drawn through warfare and colonization, creating multiple territories by artificially splitting up a landscape that does not show any clear natural obstacles like rivers or mountains.

The current political division between Sabah and Kalimantan is a combination of both. The land border spans roughly 330 km, stretching from Long Pashia and Krayan Induk to Sebatik island with a 25-km straight borderline that split the island into two.

In the interior, the central spine of rugged mountains vaguely forms the political boundary. Along the borderline, the population density is extremely low. Cross-border exchange is largely limited due to the largely mountainous terrains, usually limited to river transportation such as Lumbis Ogong (Nunukan) in North Kalimantan and Pensiangan in Sabah.

This part of the borderland may be truly regarded as a marginal area.

In the coastal area, the border is relatively artificial. Naturally, there are more trade, people, and cultural flows between Sabah and North Kalimantan, both via the river, sea route, and across the land border. People living in this part of the borderland have been longstanding partners not only in economic activities but also in cultural exchange.

Intense economic activities have in turn attracted more migration and resulted in dense populations on the border such as in Cowie Bay.

Tawau district houses about 11pc of Sabah's total population. On the North Kalimantan's side, nearly 20pc of the province's population is found in the two border islands, i.e., the Nunukan Island and the Sebatik Island.

Sebatik island is probably one of the most interesting borderland cases in the region with the island artificially divided into two halves by a straight line.

The distribution of population across the borderland reflects its economic importance. Various economic reasons drive the growth of border towns. The closest example in the region is probably Johore Bahru, the second-largest city in Malaysia located in the southern end of Peninsula Malaysia.

Tawau, in some way, may be regarded as a smaller version of it - nearly 1,000 passengers arrive at the town by ferries every day according to DOSM. While Sabah has



The new CIQ complex in Tawau

long suffered from poverty, this part of the state is not among some of the poorest regions, thanks to cross-border activities. Before MCO, the sales of marine products from Indonesia to Tawau can be up to 27 tonne or 1.2 billion IDR (roughly RM 370,000) a day.

The southeast borderland is also a major oil palm site. The three southeast districts, Tawau, Semporna, and Kunak have more than 410,000 ha of oil palm plantations, while the Nunukan District has more than 140,000 ha.

A little further to the north is the natural deep-sea port, Lahad Datu, which houses the "Palm Oil Industry Cluster" (POIC).

POIC was established to promote the integration of different industrial operations, adopting the concept of on-demand and pay-per-use facilities, such as purpose-fit storage and smart grid.

It currently serves as a hub of palm oil refining and processing, aiming to further diversify its portfolio with advanced biorefineries that produce a wider range of products.

Interestingly, the southeast borderland is also famous for its tourism businesses, which have always been important income sources for the people. In 2018, the three national parks in the borderland, namely Tun Sakaran, Sipadan Island, and Tawau Hills have attracted more than 340,000 visitors.

The activities are diversified, ranging from highly commercialised packages to rural homestay programmes. Water sports like diving and snorkelling are among the main activities.

The growth of the borderland is intertwined with the persistent problems of illegal migration, stateless population, and border security.

According to the 2020 census, the number of registered non-citizens in Sabah, including legal and illegal immigrants, is about 810 thousand. While there is an estimation of 50 thousand "stateless children", there is no clear population of the "stateless adult".

The undocumented population imposes a heavy burden on Sabah's limited educational, medical, and social service resources.

Their fundamental human rights are denied due to limited access to infrastructure, labour welfare, and livelihoods. This

vulnerable group is exposed to various criminal activities, such as drug smuggling, thus increasing the cost of security.

This might be exacerbated by potential threats from organised criminal activities along the coastal borderland.

The borderland has also attracted new attention with speculation over the potential economic opportunities brought by the relocation of Indonesia's capital to East Kalimantan.

Shifting the centre of power from Java toward the eastern part of the country is not only symbolic but will also incur redistribution of resources and wealth.

This will definitely redefine the status of the entire Borneo Island, which has long been regarded as 'a neglected island' and 'underdeveloped periphery'.

Observing and analysing the future development in the Sabah-Kalimantan borderland will be compelling as it offers a microcosm for observing the regional changes in the long run, especially putting it in historical, economic, social, and ecological contexts.

It is hoped that this article sets the scene for more discussion about the sustainable development of the Sabah-North Kalimantan borderland.

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Parenthood today is more challenging than yesteryear

Ahmad Muadz

REMEMBER those times when we played outside during rainy days just to see rainbow afterwards? Or maybe making many types of paper rockets just to test which can fly faster and more stable? Those times were so good that we always have those memories remembered once in a while.

Those times were great because we did experiments in everything, although playfully, but helping us in discovering new things.

We all may have known that children like to discover new things during their young age. Some may call this young generations as little scientists. They are easily influenced since they are searching answers for many questions.

Definitely, it is different to compare today's childhood with a decade ago, let alone longer than that. Before, we may have less resources to discover things, but now everything is at the tip of their hands.

Now is a modern technology era. We never can stop the development of technology but we can try to understand how technology works so that we can work better with it. Gadgets such as phones and computers are rarely not seen on children's hands nowadays.

So why is it important for us to know what they do? Shouldn't we let our kids dis-

cover the world their own way? Well, it is not wrong if we want to give them their freedom, but mind what your kids do because the freedom that is accessible through their gadgets are way beyond what we can think of.

Firstly, the gadgets let the kids to have access to the whole world through the internet, more precisely the social media. Social media, being a medium for people to communicate and share things, sometimes do cross the border of the right communication.

The very fundamental of social media is to connect people, but some people misuse it for personal or ideology purposes. If what consumed by our kids through social media is unfiltered, they may be influenced badly.

There are some that used the medium to spread hatred, using faulty language, and abusing the power of being a majority to cyberbully some others.

All these can influence the children to have negative attitudes as they may tend to reenact what they saw through the social media because they think that it is permissible to be so.

It should always be the number one priority for parents to watch and be mindful of what their kids are doing in their social media and what they have access to.

Nonetheless, if social media is used

rightfully, the kids can optimize every single benefit that they can get from the social media.

It must be a lie to say that kids will not be attracted to play video games on their phones. Nowadays, games have become pretty handy. Long before, there are no any video games to start with, but technologies develop too as time goes by.

We had gaming console to play games on televisions with some 2D animations, then it developed into beautiful 3D characters to play with people around. But now, the game modes are way ahead of our times, people can play games with others from around the world.

More excitingly, they can chat around and talk to many new people while they are playing. Despite seeing these as a plausible growth, there are always some things that we need to be careful with. There are certain games nowadays that depicted bad behavior.

Some games are overly violent and there are also some that show a little bit too much nudity and sexual content. The kids that are exposed to these types of contents may be impacted in their actions as in the games.

They may tend to be more violent to get what they want, or thinking that it is okay to sexualize things and to some extent they may involve themselves in consuming pornography.

Some things should have limits, and parents should take this call to be more involved in what their kids do.

Parents should be wary of these types of games and be more selective in letting children entertaining themselves.

There are always two sides of a coin. This is definitely true in the context of technologies. We should be happy as to where these developments brought us today. Even so, there are always some shortcomings in good things.

If we are more aware of our young generations, we may prevent the bad influence more effectively. Nowadays, it is impossible to prevent the youngsters from those gadgets especially given the fact that children now have online classes.

Hence, the only things that we can do is to be more cautious and thorough in our children's behavior and routine so that we can shape a good inner foundation for them. We can give them our trust, but then we should also be careful not to trust them too much.

It is okay to let them discover, but we should involve ourselves to guide them discover the good side of the world.

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