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Sarawakians put Malaysia on world map

Sarawak GPS government wants to develop talent and youths who can compete at the international level

Alena Murang is the first woman to professionally perform and teach the sape.



Datuk Pandelega Rinong Pamg showing the gold medal that she won in the Diving World Cup at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Japan in May.

NEARLY 10 years ago, a young Bidayuh from Kampung Jugan, Bau, had put Malaysia on the world map after winning a bronze medal in the 2012 Olympics in London.

Datuk Pandelega Rinong Pamg was only 19 when she came in third in the women's 10m platform diving competition.

She is the first Malaysian woman to win an Olympic medal other than badminton.

She was in tears when she heard of her achievement, and hoped to inspire more youths to take up diving despite it not being a popular sport as badminton.

In 2016, the Sarawakian created another milestone when she teamed up with Cheong Jun Hoong to land silver in the women's synchronised 10m platform in the subsequent Olympics in Rio De

Janeiro, Brazil.

In May this year, she etched her name in Malaysian history by clinching the first-ever gold medal in the Diving World Cup at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in Japan.

Now 28 years old, she defeated her rivals with a total score of 355.70 to win the women's 10m platform individual event.

To recognise her achievements, Pandelega was awarded a datukship on Oct 9 in conjunction with Yang di-Pertua Negeri Sarawak Tun Abdul Taib Mahmud's 85th birthday.

She was conferred the Darjah Yang Amat Mulia Bintang Sarawak, Panglima Setia Bintang Sarawak (PSBS), which carries the title "Datuk".

Apart from the diving queen, another Sarawakian who has put the country on the international music scene is none

other than homegrown talent Alena Murang.

The sape player cum singer-songwriter draws her inspiration from the past and present, her Dayak Kelabit heritage and while growing up in her home village.

She is also the first woman to professionally perform and teach the sape.

Her latest music video entitled "Warrior Spirit" has garnered the best Asia & Pacific music video award and as honourable mention for best costume at the recent International Music Video Awards (IMVA) in the United Kingdom.

Meanwhile, Kayan-Kenyah student Chris Deng Vinsien has made headlines in August when he became the first Malaysian indigenous student to be accepted into Oxford University to study law.

Deng was born in Baram and raised in Bintulu — a town that is the industrial heart of Sarawak. Apart from his parents, he said his boarding school experience had helped him become independent and learned to go the extra mile in his studies.

Deng hopes to show the world that Kenyah and Kayan people are culturally beautiful, and they too can achieve great heights.

To ensure that Sarawak produces more talents and competitive youths at the international level, the state government has decided to set up its own international secondary school.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Abang Johari Openg, at the groundbreaking of the first school in Jalan Kuching-Serian last year, said the state was rich in natural resources but in need of talent.

"We are not saying that the national schools or other languages are not important, but we cannot deny the fact that if we want our children to be competitive at the international level, they have to master the English language."

He said the international schools would allow excellent students from both rural and urban areas, and of all races

— even those from low-income families — to compete among themselves.

"International schools will no longer (just) be for those who can afford it, but for any Sarawakian who meets the selection criteria."

Sarawak plans to set up five international schools — two in Kuching and one each in Sibu, Miri and Bintulu. The Jalan Kuching-Serian school is expected to open in 2023.

Sarawak Education, Science and Technological Research Minister Michael Manyin Jawong said the state had proposed for an enrolment of 500 students in each school, with 100 students in each year.

The state would be hiring retired teachers and using the International General Certificate of Secondary Education syllabus by the Cambridge Assessment International Education Board.

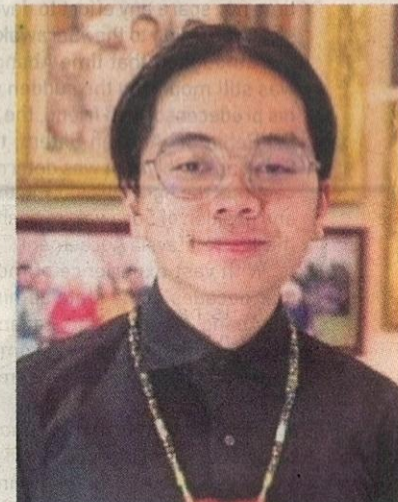
"Student selection will be inclusive as long as they are Sarawakians who meet the selection criteria. However, there will be a quota for students from well-to-do families, and they have to pay the full fees.

"Students from M40 families will receive partial subsidy, while those from B40 families will receive a full subsidy," he said, adding that the estimated operating cost of the five schools was between RM70 million and RM80 million.

On Nov 10, Abang Johari also announced three incentives for Sarawak students who wish to study at Universiti Teknologi Sarawak (UTS), which is owned by the Sarawak GPS government.

The incentives are part of an initiative to make education affordable and accessible to the underprivileged in Sarawak. They are the UTS Foundation Scholarship, UTS Undergraduate and Postgraduate Scholarship and UTS Bursary Scheme.

He said the Foundation Scholarship covered tuition fees amounting to RM10,000 per student, where the Sarawak GPS government would spend RM4.5 million to RM7 million a year, based on



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the maximum of 700 basic programme students at UTS.

The Undergraduate and Postgraduate Scholarship scheme, meanwhile, provided a 50 per cent subsidy in tuition fees for all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, where, based on a five-year projection, the Sarawak GPS government's commitment is RM17.2 million to RM27 million per year, based on a capacity of 4,000 students.

The Bursary scheme, said Abang Johari, was collaboration between UTS and the Sarawak Foundation, which aimed to help Sarawakians from the B40 and M40 categories with an 80 per cent subsidy in tuition fees.

"This scheme will accommodate a total of 100 Bumiputera students and 100 non-Bumiputera students a year, where based on the five-year projection, will involve an RM3 million per annum commitment from the Sarawak GPS government," he said.



Chief Minister Tan Sri Abang Johari Openg says for Sarawak children to be competitive at the international level, they have to master the English language.

Gunung Gading is one of the best places to view the blooms of the Rafflesia.

A land of natural beauty

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The Niah cave is believed to have been inhabited by pre-historic humans some 65,000 years ago.



Sarawak, Land of the Hornbills, has many natural attractions that provide a unique visiting experience

SARAWAK is not only rich in culture, but also has many other attractions that cater to all kinds of tourists, including those who want to enjoy nature.

The unique flora and fauna in the Land of the Hornbills have received numerous recognition not only locally, but also from the global community.

It is not too much to claim that one will immediately fall in love with the state when experiencing the hospitality of its people.

And almost 63 per cent of Sarawak is still covered in lush greenery, which reflects the state government's commitment in preserving the state's seven million hectares of forest areas.

To ensure systematic and effective conservation, Sarawak has gazetted 46 national parks, including those in Kuching Division, such as Kubah, Bako, Santubong, Kuching Wetlands, Tanjung Datu and Gunung Gading.

Others are Batang Ai in Sri Aman

Division; Bukit Lambir, Niah, Mulu and Usun Apau in Miri Division; and, Similajau and Bukit Tibah in Bintulu Division.

In addition, Sarawak has also gazetted 15 nature reserves and five wildlife sanctuaries covering a total of 2.1 million hectares of land.

The state is home to countless natural hotspots, leaving nature-lovers spoiled for choice during their visit.

The Bako, Similajau, Gunung Gading, Gunung Mulu and Niah National Parks are must-visit destinations as they not only offer beautiful sceneries, but also located near main cities, which makes them easily accessible.

Apart from these national parks, there are other new attractive locations, including Lusong Laku in the interior of Belaga.



Datuk Seri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah

Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri said Lusong Laku had great potential as a new tourism product due to its Wong Pejik waterfalls, which was almost similar to Niagara Falls in Ontario, Canada.

"We must promote these attractions to have more visitors to Sarawak. This will contribute to making Malaysia the Top of the Mind Ecotourism

Destination to the World in line with the National Tourism Policy 2020 - 2030," Nancy said during her visit to Lusong Laku on Oct 16.

Sarawak Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah said several efforts had been undertaken to empower tourism in the state.

The promotional programmes include "Jom Ke Sarawak" campaign, which is a joint collaboration between the Sarawak Tourism Board, Sarawak Tourism Federation, Association of Sarawak Inbound Agencies and Shopee Malaysia.

Karim said in addition, the Sia Sitok Sarawak 1 and 2 tourism campaigns, which offered discounts of up to 50 per cent, had received overwhelming response.

For the Sia Sitok 1 campaign, which was launched last year, 942 reservations were received from 5,664 visitors.

The Sia Sitok 2 campaign received 507 bookings involving 3,623 visitors. There were also 2,122 room reservations received during the campaign since Oct 1 last year.

We must promote these attractions to have more visitors to Sarawak. This will contribute to making Malaysia the Top of the Mind Ecotourism Destination to the World in line with the National Tourism Policy 2020 - 2030.

DATUK SERI NANCY SHUKRI
Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister



NATIONAL PARKS IN SARAWAK

BAKO NATIONAL PARK

- One of the smallest national parks in Southeast Asia spanning 27 square kilometres.
- Located at the tip of Muara Tebas, which is about 37km from Kuching (visitors from Kuching will travel to Kampung Bako and take a 20-minute boat ride to the park).
- Gazetted since 1957, the Bako National Park is home to 316 species of plants, 22 bird species, 24 species of reptile and 57 species of mammals.

SIMILAJAU NATIONAL PARK

- Showcasing unique geographical features, the Similajau National Park is 30km northeast of Bintulu.
- Apart from wonderful beaches, the 8,996-hectare park is home to 24 species of mammals, including long-tailed macaques, gibbons, banded langurs, shrews, mouse deer, barking deer, squirrels, wild boar, porcupine and civet cats.
- The park is also a birdwatcher's paradise.

GUNUNG GADING NATIONAL PARK

- Established as a forest reserve in 1929 and gazetted as a national park in 1983, Gunung Gading is one of the best places to view the blooms of the Rafflesia.
- With a total area of 4,196 hectares, visitors can go hiking to reach waterfalls and clear jungle streams that make excellent bathing spots.

GUNUNG MULU NATIONAL PARK

- Gunung Mulu National Park, a 528.64-square kilometre protected area, is a Unesco World Heritage Site.
- It encompasses equatorial rainforest, as well as an impressive range of caves and karst formations.

NIAH NATIONAL PARK

- Said to be the second best cave experience after Mulu, Niah is also the place believed to be inhabited by pre-historic humans some 65,000 years ago.
- The park headquarters is a two-hour's drive from Miri or Bintulu. Travellers need to cross the Niah river by boat and take a one-hour walk on a walkway to reach the entrance of the great cave. The walkway also connects to a homestay at an Iban longhouse.