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# State National Science Center to be set up in KK

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**KOTA KINABALU:** The Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry will also establish a state National Science Center which will be located in Kota Kinabalu area and is currently in the process of being gazetted.

This initiative is also one of the efforts of the government which is committed to empowering STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) through the provision of facilities characterised by science, technology and innovation (STI) to be explored by the people of Sabah without having to go to the National Science Centre in Kuala Lumpur, said Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Dr Mohd Arifin Mohd Arif.

Mohd Arifin disclosed that once completed, Sabah will be the third state to have such a facility after Kuala Lumpur and Kedah.

When winding up for his ministry at the State Assembly sitting on Wednesday, Mohd Arifin said the Human Resource Development Department (JPSM) had planned to implement the 'Perancangan Upskilling initiative JPSM for 2024 which includes the Sabah Talent Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP) 2024 and the High Impact Training Programme (HITP).

This year, JPSM, he said, will set up the Sabah TVET Council that is responsible for determining TVET Sabah policy in line with current needs of both local and global industries.

Additionally, the enhancement of infrastructure for the Technical and Vocational Training Institutes (ILTP) to assume the role as a TVET Hub in welding, JPSM collaborates with UniKL to obtain input for improving welding skills.

Furthermore, JPSM, through ILTP, has planned to implement

an Electric Vehicle (EV) program in collaboration with MARII.

In JPSM's planning for the Career Carnival and HELP in 2024, it was decided that five carnivals will be conducted in Kemabong (May 5), Tawau (July 27), SICC (August 24), Sandakan (Sept 7) and ITCC Penampang (Nov 9).

He also said that construction of new libraries in the state is progressing well, as exemplified by the Kunak Branch Library, which is 58 per cent complete, and the Tenom Branch Library, which is 24.26 per cent complete, adding that the construction of the Kota Marudu Branch Library building will commence this year.

For the rural areas, the construction of new village library buildings in Lubok Darat, Sipitang, is expected to be completed by June and is 16.98 per cent completed so far. Three village library building projects in Kg Entilibon, Tongod, Kg Karakit, Banggi and Kg Larapan Hujung, Semporna, have been handed over to the Public Works Department for implementation.

The ministry is planning to develop the Sabah Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Geospatial Data Center to study and identify research and development (R&D) needs under the STI domain.

This Data Center will serve as a strategic information sharing platform between agencies and users, utilizing resources efficiently and optimally based on policies and laws, facilitating and aiding the government in making sustainable decisions in specialised fields relevant to Sabah's needs and potentials, he added.

This data will strengthen information and service sharing with the efficient and optimal use of resources based on policies and laws. Geospatial data sharing will facilitate and encourage R&D advancements and aid decision-



Mohd Arifin (left) having a discussion with Chief Minister Datuk Seri Panglima Hajiji Noor.

making in specific areas relevant to Sabah's needs and potentials.

The development of this Data Center encompasses the implementation and coordination of R&D activities among government agencies, research institutions, and industry players in Sabah's key economic sectors.

"This synergistic integration of information and services will contribute to effective information dissemination and assist the government in planning science infrastructure development, including research center construction, to ensure Sabah becomes a quality human resource and innovation hub in line with the Strategic Core of R&D&C&I development to enhance STIE capabilities in

Sabah," he said.

In 2020, the state government, through the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry funded the purchase of the Bosch Rexroth Cyber Physical Training System 14.0, which was installed at the Sabah Skills & Training Centre (SSTC), serving as a platform for Industry 4.0 training in Sabah.

This initiative was very timely as Malaysia, through the National Policy on Industry 4.0 or Industry4WRD, is crucial in transforming the industrial landscape in the country in the next decade to ensure that human capital can be trained and adapt to the 14.0 technology environment and the absorption of 14.0 technology among industry players.

The development project of the 14.0 Advancement Centre at SSTC will ensure that all efforts to disseminate 14.0 technology are carried out accurately, quickly and relevantly at all levels, especially to the state of Sabah, he said.

However, at this stage, SSTC is facing constraints in obtaining funding to expedite the development project of the 14.0 Advancement Centre at SSTC. SSTC hopes that this project will receive the utmost attention from the state government and hopes that efforts to realize it can be facilitated and expedited so that the state can compete with other advanced states," said Mohd Arifin.

One of the efforts in increasing economic growth and poverty eradication in Sabah is through social entrepreneurship and social innovation which KSTI takes very seriously, said Mohd Arifin, adding that the initiative is in line with the Social Development Goal (SDG) in ensuring sustainable social and community development.

The ministry, he said, has taken the initiative to plan and install internet facilities in rural areas using satellite technology (VSAT) to reduce the digital divide, especially in remote areas, to accelerate digital transformation in Sabah.

Through collaboration with UPPM, JKKK, MCMC and the ministry, a total of 300 locations have been identified where a total of 67 per cent or 202 locations have now been equipped with satellite (VSAT) and enjoyed by residents in rural areas with internet access provided by Sabah Net. As of April 22 this year, there are still 98 locations undergoing installation, he said, adding that it is in line with the State Government's goal to become a high-tech state.

"It is my ministry's main focus to enhance and expand internet

coverage, especially in rural and remote areas in this state, in collaboration with the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC)," he said.

Through the National Digital Network Plan (JENDELA), several frameworks have been planned, such as the construction of new towers, upgrading existing towers to 4G service, expanding fiber optic service provision, and providing satellite broadband.

As of February 2024, among the projects implemented are, 281 out of 647 planned towers have been completed; 4,473 out of 4,486 planned transmitter stations have been upgraded to 4G; 208,926 out of 303,569 premises have been provided with gigabit-speed fiber; 138 VSAT satellite broadband service locations under MCMC and 23 VSAT under the ministry have been fully completed.

For 5G network expansion, 467 sites are operational out of 595 planned sites.

"With all these efforts, I am pleased to announce that as of the fourth quarter of 2023, the percentage of mobile broadband coverage in populated areas in the state has increased to 90.59 per cent compared to 73.41 per cent before the implementation of JENDELA in the second quarter of 2020. Meanwhile, the percentage of 5G coverage in populated areas in Sabah has reached 68.1 per cent," said Mohd Arifin.

The ministry, he stressed, takes note of the delays faced by the JENDELA project in the state and is monitoring the delay issue through the State Technical Committee on Digital Technology Infrastructure Development.

The ministry, he added, through MCMC, has been actively engaging with several state and federal government agencies to ensure that all challenges faced by tower builders in implementing the JENDELA project can be overcome.