

# Sarawak will welcome UTHM

BY HARUN JAU

**KUCHING:** The state government will welcome Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) if it wants to spread its wings to Sarawak, especially to help increase the number of technically skilled workers among the younger generation.

Chief Minister Pehin Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud said the state was now embarking on the development of Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (SCORE) and it would need few hundred thousands of skilled workers and engineers in the next 20 to 30 years.

"So definitely, we welcome UTHM to spread its wings to Sarawak so that it can help Sarawak to fulfil this need and be able to achieve what we aim for SCORE," said Taib, whose text of speech was read by Infrastructure Development and Communications Minister Dato Sri Michael Manyin Jawong at the opening of Soft Soils Engineering International Conference 2013 (SEIC '13) at Riverside Majestic Hotel here, yesterday.

The Chief Minister said this would be the real challenge for Sarawak as it had a population of only 2.5 million, but would still need about 200,000 to 300,000 engineers in SCORE.

"We hope that probably in not too distance future, we will have UTHM spreading over its wing to Sarawak," he said.

He stressed that it was vital for the engineers to comprehend and understand the characteristics of soft soil.

"Innovative laboratory techniques, physical models and numbers, analytical theory and constitutive model provide a new



**KNOWLEDGE-SHARING:** Dato Sri Michael Manyin (centre) hitting the gong to officially declare open the Soft Soil Engineering International Conference (SEIC) 2013, witnessed by Tan Sri Dr Jamilus Md Hussin (right), Ir Zuraimi Sabki (second right) and Prof Dato' Dr. Mohd Noh Dalimin. PHOTO: RAMIDI SUBARI

perspective to the soil structure interaction.

"The large scale field experiments, on the other hand, provide important information and observations on the behaviours of the prototype," he said.

He pointed out that it was very interesting to have "Soft Soil Engineering Challenges and Sustainable Solutions" as the chosen theme for the conference as it would reveal the real challenges of soft soil.

"The findings, ideas and insights presented in this conference will definitely allow experts

and researchers to provide valuable and effective solutions for the benefit and progress of the country," said Taib.

The Chief Minister said the involvement of several Sarawak-based companies at the conference would bring some significant impacts in the development of the state.

"I was also informed that the research on soft soil carried out in UTHM Johore is also being conducted in Sarawak due to the similar geographical conditions in both locations," he said.

The conference is organ-

ised by the RECESS Centre of Excellence and Faculty of Civil Engineering and Environment (FKAAS) of UTHM in collaboration with Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), Ministry of Infrastructure Development, and Communications (MIDCom), State Public Works Department, Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) Sarawak Branch, Institution of Engineers Malaysia (IEM) and Association of Consulting Engineers Malaysia (ACEM).

The three-day conference, themed "Soft Soil Engineering

Challenges and Sustainable Solutions" is being attended by many well-known researchers from various countries, geotechnic professionals, engineers, academicians and experts in soft soil.

In his welcoming speech, Vice-Chancellor of UTHM, Prof Dato' Dr Mohd Noh Dalimin, said UTHM looked forward to greater cooperation with the Sarawak State Government in developing human capitals among the people of the state, especially in the technical and engineering fields.

"I strongly believe this would produce generations of young Sarawakians who can be experts in these fields. I also believe this would support the rapid developments currently being implemented by the Chief Minister of Sarawak," he said.

On the conference, Mohd Noh said the objectives were to create a platform for knowledge sharing between universities, government agencies and industries in relation to construction at soft soil areas; to organise academic programmes that would create awareness among the participants of the challenges and achievements in the field of soft soil engineering; and to generate income for RECESS Fund that would activate research activities related to soft soil engineering.

He said the conference had attracted many renowned geotechnic professionals, engineers, academicians and reserchers from around the globe who carried out researches specifically on soft soil.

Meanwhile, 62 working papers will be presented during the conference which attracts a total of 220 participants from nine countries.