

Suria Group to undertake Kota Kinabalu Port project

KOTA KINABALU: Suria Group will be undertaking the construction of a dedicated international cruise terminal at Kota Kinabalu Port that serves as a marine gateway and second entry point to the city.

Its group managing director Ng Kiat Min said cruise tourism was the sixth Entry Point Project under the Tourism National Key Economic Area intended to improve Malaysia's competitiveness as a cruise destination.

"Kota Kinabalu Port has been identified as one of three ports, alongside Penang and Klang, as having the potential to contribute significantly to the Malaysian cruise industry" she said at the launch of the Sabah Port Forum here recently.

"The dedicated cruise terminal here will complement other Suria Group development, such as Jesselton Quay and One Jesselton Waterfront," said Ng, adding the state capital would be a destination with world-class attractions, infrastructure and leisure facilities.

Last year, Malaysia recorded 435 cruises, with 682,000 passengers. In the same period, 37 cruise and military ships, with 33,039 visitors, arrived in Sabah via Tawau, Sandakan and here. Present were Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai and Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman.

Liow, in his opening remarks, said Sabah's strategic location within the Asean region could help the state unlock its potential as a player in the maritime and logistics sector.

He added the Federal Government had allocated and approved RM1.027 billion for the expansion of Sapangar Bay Container Port. It would be developed into a transshipment hub that would drive economic growth here.

Meanwhile, Liow said, research by the World Bank had indicated weak distribution channels, high handling charges and inefficient inland transportation were the contributing factors for high costs in Sabah.

"However, the government is reviewing the cabotage policy for further liberalisation mechanisms to ensure the affordability of goods and services."

The policy, which was implemented in the state since 1980s, requires all domestic transshipment of goods to be made using Malaysian vessels. By Olivia Miwil