High demand for higher O&G skills in Sabah

By Shalina R.

KOTA KINABALU: Sabah foresees vast job opportunities for locals with the increasing demand for higher end skilled workers in its rapidly developing oil and gas (O & G) industry.

However, according to Resource Development and Information Technology Minister, Datuk Siringan Gubat, 70% of the current local workforce are mainly trained in the lower end skills level, such as welding, blasting and painting.

Only a small unspecified number has the high end skills required for the state's growing industry, he said, adding that some 25,000 of skilled workers are at different levels, ranging from managerial, specialized to technical.

"Many local engineers, technologists and technicians with skills required by the O & G industry will be needed in Sabah in the coming years. Unfortunately, opportunities for local Sabahans to acquire such technical skills are hard to come by," he said at the IEM (Institution of Engineers Malaysia)-IMM (Institute of Materials Malaysia)-UMS (Universiti Malaysia Sabah) forum on eTechnical Workscopes in the Oil & Gas Industry held here yesterday.

"They are more than welcome to return home to assist other fellow Sabahans to succeed in Sabah," Siringan stressed.

The demand for both high and low end skilled workers will continue to increase with the numerous upstream and downstream projects by Petronas and their international partners such as Shell, Murphy Oil, and Talisman, he said.

"Major infrastructure projects such as the Sipitang O & G Industrial Park (SOGIP), Sabah O & G Terminal (SOGT), and Sabah-Sarawak Gas Pipeline (SSGP) will bring in companies and investors, providing services as well as major downstream activities in petrochemicals and associated industries, and hence development of local talents and jobs," said the minister.

"With Gumusut Kakap, a major deepwater project coming on stream, we will see another boost for the oil and gas industry in Sabah," he emphasized.

Equipment the various technical skills onto the local workforce is needed to meet the demands and requirements of Sabah's O & G industry. The Resource Development and IT ministry financed forum is aimed at engaging Sabah and Labuan's industry players to assist in addressing issues that would raise the level of technical capability of local Sabahan individuals and companies.

"It is the government's hope that forums like this will help to generate awareness of our local needs. This will provide an avenue to develop our local talent and expertise in the years to come. The O & G industry is a growing industry in Sabah and many business and job opportunities await local Sabahans if they are willing to learn and develop their skills," said Siringan.

The half-day forum, jointly organized by IEM Sabah Branch, IMM Sabah Chapter and UMS, was in collaboration with Petronas and the ministry's Sabah Skills Training Centre (SSTC).

Apart from raising awareness on the growing industry, the forum also focuses on developing young entrepreneurs in the O & G industry.