SDC contributions significant — economist

Dr Rafiq Idris, an Economist, Senior Lecturer from Financial Economics Program, Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah said projects by the SDC had contributed significantly to Sabah’s economy during the last 10 years. 

Although he acknowledged that many other factors had contributed to the economic growth in the State, many good things had been brought to Sabah due to this national corridor programme.

“The SDC is an economic corridor programme that is undertaken to further develop various areas in Sabah. It is one of the four other corridor programmes in the country, namely Northern Corridor Economic Region, East Coast Economic Region, Iskandar Malaysia and Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy,” he stated.

“These five economic corridor programmes were initiated under the Ninth Malaysia Plan to reduce development imbalances throughout the country,”

According to him, consistent with national agenda, the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) and the National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs) that aimed to transform Malaysia into a high-income nation by the year 2020, the SDC had several key focus areas.

“This includes tourism, logistics and manufacturing, higher education, oil, gas and energy, agriculture and palm oil. In this regard, among the programmes that fall under the SDC include Kinabalu Harbour Front and Gold Coast Enclave, consolidating logistics and transportation infrastructure,” he said, adding that this also included the Sabah Agro Industrial Precinct as well as Sipitang Oil and Gas Industrial Park, Keningau Integrated Livestock Centre (KILC), Marine Industrial Cluster (MIC) in Southern region.

“There are also the Palm Oil Industrial Cluster (POIC) and Sandakan Education Hub (SEHU). As a result of some of these programmes, more downstreaming activities have been created under the SDC.

“In terms of infrastructure, in the past 10 years many are in the pipeline. For example, port transshipment hub in Sepanggar, Pan Borneo highway among others shall definitely further improve the connectivity and logistical efficiency in Sabah.”

According to him, the Pan Borneo availability, huge increase has been reported during the SDC period. For instance in 2007, new vacancies (by occupation) in Sabah were reported to be only 7,999. Between 2009 and 2010, annually the new vacancies were reported to be more than 56,000. Between 2011 and 2016, new vacancies were reported to be more than 100,000 every year. For instance, in 2016, it was reported that there were 120,176 vacancies.

He stressed that these numbers were not SDC programmes vacancies but the overall availability of jobs.

“Despite the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, the recent slowing down in the world economy, the drop in world oil price and the depreciation of Ringgit among others, Sabah has recorded a significant achievement at least in some of the economic indicators.”

He expressed his hopes that Sabah would continue to grow in the years to come especially in the third phase of the SDC.