

Tan: Terminal ready by 2018

KOTA KINABALU: The ongoing construction of the container terminal in the Palm Oil Industrial Cluster (POIC) Lahad Datu will be completed by 2018.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Raymond Tan said the handling capacity for the terminal will be 50,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent unit) per year and will be able to dock a Panamax ship with a capacity of 65,000 DWT (deadweight tonnage).

"The container port is a critical development enabler to support various industrial activities as well as to cater to the logistic needs and demands from existing investors and potential investors in POIC Lahad Datu apart from the existing facilities like roads, water and power supply, sewerage and telecommunication, bulk and liquid jetty," he said during question time at the State Assembly sitting, here, on Wednesday.

He was responding to a question from Bongawan assemblyman Datuk Mohamad Alamin on the current status of the POIC Lahad Datu port terminal.

Tan also said the terminal is also expected to attract more local and foreign investors to Sabah, especially in the industrial sector which is in line with the effort to achieve the industrialised state status for Sabah.

To a supplementary question by Mohamad, Tan said what is more important for the POIC Lahad Datu to progress is the industrial eco-system, instead of the size of the port.

"In our initial plans, the container terminal in POIC will have a capacity of 50,000 TEUs and hopefully one day, it will reach 250,000 TEUs which is the same capacity for the Sepanggar Container Port.

"What's more important in our plans is not to have a big port but instead, to encourage industrial activities.

"Even during the construction phase, the current infrastructure in POIC can cater to the existing industrial activities ... and we encourage industrial connections from our neighbours like Indonesia and the Philippines as such connectivity is very important."

Tan said Sabah is blessed with a strategic location where the State has access to almost all of the Asean region.

"And I hope the container port in POIC can turn into a transshipment hub as what has been planned for the Sepanggar Port," he said. - **Ricardo Unto**