

SPEECH BY

THE HONOURABLE

DATUK HAJI HAJIJI HAJI NOOR,

MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING,

STATE OF SABAH, MALAYSIA

ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT BY THE DELEGATION FROM THE SABAH HOUSING & TOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (LPPB) TO THE SWEDISH ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPAL HOUSING COMPANY (SABO) ON 17TH JUNE 2008

Good Morning,

(Mr/Miss/Mrs/Madam)

Marika Lundin, Head of Human Resource Group;

(Miss/Mrs/Madam) Elisabet Sundberger and Ylva Sandstroem

of Swedish Association of Municipal Housing Companies or SABO here in Stockholm.

First of all I would like to say a big Thank You to SABO for agreeing to receive us. It is indeed my pleasure to lead this delegation from the Sabah Housing and Town Development Authority of LPPB in our national language for a study visit to your esteemed organization.

LPPB is a state government agency under the Ministry of Local Government and Housing of Sabah, one of the 13 States within Malaysia. This statutory body was formed 40 years ago with the initial aim of helping the lower-income group own houses through the construction of low-cost or affordable houses.

Its role was expanded to include the construction of new townships some years later. That was when it became LPPB. Since its inception until now STHDA has built a total of 28,000 houses or low-cost flats.

By comparison, the Swedish Association of Municipal Housing Companies or SABO through its 300 member housing companies own and operate 800,000 dwellings. Thus, we are just a small fry compared to you, and that is why we are here - to study and learn from you. This is important especially because STHDA, apart from the 28,000 houses it had built, is also managing or 'operating' or you call it, a few thousand flats which are rented out to the qualified local homeless at very low rental rates compared to commercial rates.

With continuous demand for public housing in our State and the Government's vision of providing one house for each family, it is our goal trying to fulfill these challenges. In today's global environment of climate change where exceptional weather pattern alter the conventional design concept and record high fuel price substantially increasing the cost of construction, we constantly require to upgrade our know-how to face these forever changing factors.

Designers today need to produce more efficient and environment friendly layout and cost effective building design. New technology and improved construction materials are required to ensure that all these challenges are met. In this context, I strongly believe our visit to your esteemed organization is indeed timely.

We have definitely gained a lot from your excellent and informative briefing that provide new inputs to be incorporated in the panning of public housing in Sabah, Malaysia. I am looking forward to the site visits this afternoon to development projects within Stockholm to be guided by the Director of Urban Planning, Mr Mats Pemer himself.

May I take this opportunity to tell you a little about our State of Sabah which is also known as the "Land Below The Wind". As I have mentioned earlier, Sabah is one of the 13 States in Malaysia which is located in South East Asia. Malaysia is divided into two parts, with 11 States being in Peninsular Malaysia which is flanked by Singapore island in the south and Thailand and the Asia mainland in the north. The two remaining states, Sabah and Sarawak, are located on Borneo island, the third largest island in the world. Other countries occupying Borneo are Indonesia and Brunei.

Sabah, with an area of 76,000 square kilometers, is the second largest state in Malaysia. We are located on the northern tip of Borneo with a population of about 3 million people. We offer an astonishing diversity of landscapes and people, as well as richly varied plants and animal life. Our land mass is still greatly covered with rain forest and vegetation and I believe it is the same for this beautiful country or yours. In order to maintain the eco-system, we place great emphasis to protect the environment in our development projects.

With 2.7 millions tourist arrivals last year, Sabah is the perfect place for the adventurous; offering world-class scuba diving states like Sipadan and Layang-Layang islands. We are also home to South East Asia's highest mountain, Mount Kinabalu surrounded by the Kinabalu Park which has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Sabah is also famous for its rare animals like the Orangutan, the Proboscis Monkeys and the Sumatran Rhino.

It was perhaps these natural attractions which drew His Majesty King Carl Gustaf XVI and Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden to visit Sabah in 1996. King Carl was also the first Head of State of the world to visit the Danum Valley Conservation Area, a 438- square-kilometer reserve sited in Sabah's tropical rain forest, set aside for research and education. Indeed, we in Sabah were very honoured and very proud of King Carl's visit as it helped put Sabah on the world nature tourism map.

Before I conclude my speech, once again I would like to thank all of you and SABO for arranging and receiving us for this study visit and I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to visit our beautiful State of Sabah in the very near future. As a token of appreciation, I would like to present you with a souvenir as a remembrance of our visits.

Thank you.