By Jane Moh

SIBU: Minister of Local Government and Community Development Dato Sri Wong Soon Koh said University College of Technology Sarawak (UCTS) needed participation from everyone to ensure its success.

Speaking at a forum on ‘Higher Education Opportunities’ at Kingwood Hotel here yesterday, Wong, who is also the Second Finance Minister, said his aim was to turn UCTS into an international university.

“This is a community-based university college which is not just a pride of Sibu, but the people in Malaysia,” he said.

He said in time to come, with UCTS, KLT and a proposed international school nearby, the Old Airport Road (Teng Chin Hua Road) would become an education centre.

He believed that UCTS would create many jobs and business opportunities and contribute immensely to the development of Sibu town.

He urged all quarters to help find ways to encourage international students to study in UCTS.

“Our target is to make UCTS an international university, (and) we need everyone’s support to make it a reality,” he said.

According to him, UCTS is a project close to his heart since joining politics.

“Although (busy) with so many projects, including Kolej Laila Taib (formerly the United College Sarawak), I can say that I am very happy and proud with UCTS.

“Now, Sibu has its own university. It is not just a university, but one of its kind in Malaysia using green technology,” he enthused.

He said the design of UCTS was an inspiration from the Rajang River and the project would be done in phases.

The first phase of the project is scheduled for completion in November.

Wong revealed that foundation classes would start in June, and the first undergraduate batch would start their first class in September.

Meanwhile, vice-chancellor of UCTS Professor Dato Dr Hakim Juri said UCTS was currently at the beginning stage, and more work needed to be done.

He said people’s participation was important to make UCTS a success.

“We want to make UCTS our pride globally, putting UCTS and Sibu on the world map,” he said.

Dr Hakim is a mechanical engineer from Malacca. His education career started when he became an engineering lecturer in University Malaya after graduating from overseas.

He was instrumental in the setting up of University Kuala Lumpur (UniKL), which now has about 20,000 students.

“It is a challenge and an opportunity to come to Sarawak and make UCTS a preferred University in Malaysia,” he said.

He also said that students who joined the foundation programme in June, would get full scholarships.

UCTS plans to have a capacity of about 5,000 undergraduates and postgraduates. Masters and doctorate programmes may be introduced in UCTS in 2015.

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