

**SPEECH OF YB DATUK TIONG THAI KING
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT P.211 LANANG
AND CHAIRMAN OF SIBU MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
DURING THE DINNER IN CONJUNCTION WITH
30TH ANNIVERSARY OF SIBU MUNICIPAL COUNCIL**

YB Dato Sri Wong Soon Koh, Senior Minister, Minister of Finance II, Minister of Local Government & Community Development who is representing YAB Pehin Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud, the Honorable Chief Minister of Sarawak

YBhg. Datin Sri Leong Poh Lin

YB Datuk John Sikie Tayai, Assistant Minister for Local Government Sarawak

YBhg. Dr. Penguang Manggil, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Local Government & Community Development

YBhg. En. Daniel Ngieng Kiong Ann, Deputy Chairman of Sibu Municipal Council and wife

Tan Sri Datuk Sir Tiong Hiew King,

YBhg. En. Sim Kok Kee, Tuan Resident Bahagian Sibu

Mr. Kong Sien Han, Past Chairman of SMC

SMC Councillors and Ex-Councillors

Datuk-Datuk, Ketua-Ketua Jabatan, Ketua-Ketua Masyarakat

All staff of SMC

Press, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening.

It is my great pleasure to welcome everyone to this auspicious occasion – a dinner hosted by Sibu Municipal Council in conjunction with its 30th Anniversary.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Sibu Municipal Council has its humble beginning dated back to 1925 when it was established in the form of Sibu Municipal Board. The Board consisted of the Resident of third division as the Chairman. The then Municipal Officer was the Sibu District Officer. Other official members of the then Sibu Municipality were the Sibu Divisional Engineer, the Superintendent of Sibu Lands & Surveys and the Sibu Divisional Medical Officer. Unofficial members also known as Sibu Municipal Commissioners were nominated from amongst the heads of various communities.

Sibu Municipal Board continued to operate till end of 1951. It was renamed Sibu Urban District Council, a local government entity, which was financially self-supporting and managing its own local affairs. The then Sibu District Officer was the Chairman to the Council and continued until end of 1957. Members of the Council were all nominated.

The first election of the Sibu Urban District Council was held on Sunday, December 15, 1957. The elected Council was divided into nine (9) electoral wards with 20 members. The Sibu District Officer was an ex-officio member, who remained a member of the Council till end of 1959. In the second general election, the 21 members of the Council were elected on Sunday, December 06, 1959 to serve until Saturday, June 15, 1963. The third general election of the Sibu Urban District Council for 21 members was held on Sunday, June 23, 1963. The 21 Councillors elected and held office for more than 18 years till Saturday, October 31, 1981.

The Sibu Urban District Council was re-structured and upgraded to SIBU MUNICIPAL COUNCIL on Sunday, November 01, 1981 with areas of coverage increased from 50 km square to 129.5 km square.

Most of the duties of a local authority remain unchanged to-date but three important functions had due to the formation of Malaysia, a federation, been taken over by the Federal Government. Many of you may not be aware that Council was responsible for primary education, fire services and maternity and child health clinic. In 1973, the Government took over the administration of primary education, which used to be one of the major functions of the local authorities. In 1979, the Maternity and Child Health Clinic and in 1981 the Fire Fighting Services were taken over by the Federal Government.

With its rich history and close relationship with the local community, Council does not want its 30th birthday to pass silently. We feel duty bound to have a simple yet meaningful celebration to commemorate SMC's 30th Anniversary. The celebration helps to recall many bitter and sweet memories for those who witness the development of SUDC to SMC in the 60s, 70s and 80s. To the younger generation, the celebration not only gives them a closer insight of the roles, functions and contributions of their local government, it also brings them into time tunnel of Sibu's past which they did not have a chance to go through. We encourage everyone in Sibu to visit the Sibu Development Exhibition at Sibu Trade Exhibition Centre, which will be opened until 12 November.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Sibu Municipal Council has grown to become one of the largest local authorities in Sarawak. Today, it has total revenue of about RM55 million with total staff strength of 523. 30 years ago in 1981, the total revenue was only about RM8 million with staff strength of about 150. Assessment rates to be collected then were only about RM 4 million. Today we are expecting about RM 29 million.

Over the years Council has provided many infrastructure and facilities which include Sibu Public Library, Wong Nai Siong Multi-Storey carpark, Taman Jubli Bukit Aup, Sibu Central Market and Lembangan Multi-Storey Carpark.

In our efforts to develop the town, we are indeed very encouraged and we are proud of many NGOs and individuals who are willing to work in smart partnership with us in adopting parks and facilities. To date, we have a total of 17 gardens and sports facilities developed through such smart partnership, which even other towns talk about.

Sibu Municipal Council is also at the forefront in ensuring that we have a sustainable urban environment. We have made it a point to host Earth Day and Earth Hour annually to show our commitment to save our mother earth. Initiatives like 3R, composting, garbage enzymes, tree planting, reduction of plastic bags and segregation of waste at source have become one of our priorities for many years.

In keeping our town clean and tidy, we have resettled all hawkers at side and back lanes. Illegal hawkers are hardly seen due to our strict enforcement. We have also beefed up our efforts to keep five-footways clean and tidy by leveling uneven steps, restricting display of goods and motorcycles. Further, I Love A Clean Sibu Campaign has made an impact to maintain clean and tidy streets.

Sibu Municipal Council has just launched the Sibu Urban Surveillance System adding 42 units of CCTVs to the existing 12 units in the town centre. Such initiative and coverage is the widest in Sarawak. It helps in Council's effort in ensuring that Sibu become a safe city. Other safe city initiatives include putting up more street lighting, safety mirrors and bollards to segregate pedestrians from moving vehicles.

Council is venturing beyond its traditional role of municipal service providers. Since year 2000, we have hosted the Borneo Cultural Festivals and Year End Countdown annually for the people of Sibu. The events are showcase for the rich ethnic culture and traditions of Sarawak also helps to promote Sibu as the Gateway to Central Sarawak.

Sibu Council has also established international linkages for knowledge sharing and other bilateral ties. We were a member of the Kitakyushu Initiative Network for Clean Environment and we have friendship ties with 9 cities in China.

In celebrating our 30th Anniversary, SMC has vowed to improve its customer service. We have just launched the SMC SMS Hotline and we are inviting public to come to our Open Day this coming Friday.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Sibu has grown by leaps and bounds from its humble beginning to a big settlement today. Under the Barisan Nasional Government, and in particular the Sibu BN Team, we have witnessed many phases of development of Sibu town. Today, we have well connected protocol and ring roads in town and also trunk roads connecting Sibu with the other major towns like Kuching, Bintulu, Miri especially after the completion of the three major bridges, namely Igan Bridge, Durin Bridge and Lanang Bridge. Completion of more bridges such as the Lebaan bridge has also linked Sibu to the deep sea port of Tanjung Manis. The riverine express terminal, express bus terminal further enhances efficiency of transportation. The extension and renovation of Sibu Airport is well underway.

There are many dreams and proposals to develop the town. We have some brilliant and interesting ideas from consultants, professionals and people on the streets. They include proposals like Sibu Waterfront, Redevelopment of Sungai Merah Market, Urban renewal of the old residential areas, Sibu Pedestrian Mall, Swan Park, Lifestyle Island, Kampung Dato Redevelopment and many other interesting commercial developments.

Government has its limitation in resources. As such, an important driving force in Sibu's future development is the private sector. We thanked many local corporate leaders for taking up the challenge to invest in hotels and commercial development. Recent ones are RH Hotel, Kingwood Hotel extension, Giant Hypermarket and Daesim MegaMall. I encourage the corporate leaders in Sibu to take a look at some of the development proposals and we welcome privatization initiatives.

On behalf of Sibu Municipal Council, I would like to take this opportunity here to express my sincere appreciation to all ex-Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Councillors, Secretaries and staff who have served this Council faithfully. Without your hardwork and contribution, Sibu Municipal Council will not be standing tall as it is today.

To the existing Councillors and staff, I hope that you will continue our success stories and make Sibu Municipal Council one of the most dynamic, proactive and competitive local authorities in Sarawak.

Last but not least, I wish you good health and prosperity.

Thank you.