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Special unit to nab drug smugglers

Drug transit shifting to smaller airports; scanners for all entry points to country

By Peter Boon
reporters@theborneopost.com

SIBU: Police have been instructed to put up a recommendation for the establishment of a special border security unit to detect drug smugglers, including installation of scanners at all entry points and smaller airports.

In giving this instruction yesterday, Deputy Home Minister Dato Sri Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said the proposed unit would cover all strategic entry points in the country.

"The unit is to be manned by highly trained officers and men who are, among other things, able to detect 'the body language' of visitors," Wan Junaidi told The Borneo Post.

He was reacting to Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Ahmad Maslan's statement that the government was looking into the possibility of equipping smaller airports in Sarawak and Sabah with high-tech scanners to beef up enforcement against drug smuggling.

Ahmad reportedly said the government needed to act quickly on this as drug smugglers were changing their tactics and smuggling drugs through smaller airports with no scanning

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Dato Sri Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, Deputy Home Affairs Minister

facilities.

Ahmad further added it would be top priority and that he would propose to the top officials of the Finance Ministry to study the matter.

Customs director-general Datuk Chik Omar Chik Lim reportedly said the Mulu Airport in Sarawak was suspected to be among the entry points for drug smugglers because it did not have a scanning machine.

KLIA Customs director Datuk Chik Omar Chik Lim reportedly said the Mulu Airport in Sarawak was suspected to be among the entry points for drug smugglers because it did not have a scanning machine.

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NICE DEPICTION: Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin signing his name next to a caricature of himself after witnessing the 'Strategic Collaboration' ceremony between Sarawak Region Community Colleges and high-impact industries at Kolej Komuniti Kuching. ◆ Story on Page 6.

Sarawak seeks GST-free airfares

KUCHING: The state government has called on the federal government to consider exempting airfares for Sarawak from the goods and services tax (GST), which comes into effect in April.

Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Adenan Satem made the request at a leaders with Sarawak industry players dinner attended by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin on Thursday.

"Air service is an important mode of transport in the state due to our huge size and geography, coupled with poor road network," he pointed out in a speech read by Minister of Industrial

Development Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan.

On high logistics costs due to geographical location, he hoped the federal government would continue to provide Double Tax Reductions for the manufacturing industry and Accelerated Capital Allowance for Future Transport Equipment so as to make Sarawak more competitive.

Adenan also called for more federal government funding to develop industrial estates, particularly in smaller towns with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to improve the standard of living of the people and accelerate the process of reaching a high

income status.

"Under the 11th Malaysia Plan (11MP), the state government has requested for an allocation of RM1.45 billion. But more funds are needed as it is our hope to see industrial estates being established in each district and small town," he said.

"These small towns are where SMEs exist and developed based on local raw materials but more assistance is needed to support their growth."

Adenan highlighted several issues and challenges faced in Sarawak that required strong support from the federal government in order to see

greater development and progress including the maintenance of industrial parks, which only received up to RM4 million a year.

"Currently the funds come from the Malaysian Industrial Development Authority (Mida)," he said.

Adenan stressed that shipbuilding is a local industry that has potential for greater development as it is able to generate over RM2 billion a year on average, with 54 such companies in the state providing employment for some 22,000.

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Six-day-old baby Oliver Hope has youngest US heart transplant

LOS ANGELES: A six-day-old premature baby has become the youngest infant to receive a heart transplant at a US hospital, doctors and her proud parents said Thursday.

Baby Oliver Crawford underwent the operation at Phoenix Children's Hospital in Arizona after being born seven weeks ahead of schedule with a heart defect, which meant her parents didn't expect him to survive.

"The doctors had very little hope that he would survive the

pregnancy, and when our water broke at 33 weeks I was prepared to deliver a still born baby," said Caylyn Otto.

"But he came out fighting." The baby is recovering in hospital after being born on Jan 5.

His mother and father Chris Crawford were first alerted to the problem after a prenatal exam at 20 weeks showed a defect in the tiny baby's heart, called dilated cardiomyopathy.

It was confirmed four weeks later. "The left ventricle was huge for a

24-week-old," pediatric cardiologist Dr Christopher Lindblade told the Arizona Republic, adding: "It was massive."

They even prepared for Oliver's funeral, clearing their home of toys, diapers and other things.

"It was too hard for me to look at all that stuff," said Otto. A hospice worker asked her if she would want to hold her stillborn baby, before he was taken away. "I don't think I can," Otto told her husband, according to the newspaper. "I don't think I can

hold him like that." "We kept saying, if we just get to hold him for one minute. That's all we ask. Just one minute with our son," Otto told the newspaper.

"Every minute more we get is a blessing," she said.

Lindblade, the director of the hospital's Fetal Heart Programme, had recently reviewed a major study on neonatal babies, which gave a prognosis for infants with Oliver's condition.

Using statistics from the study, he told the parents that their

baby had a 58 per cent chance of not dying or not having to have a heart transplant. But while the odds were daunting, the anxious parents knew they meant there was still a chance — so they nicknamed their infant son Oliver Hope, short for "all of our hope."

Doctors planned for a birth at 36 weeks, but Otto went into labour at 33 weeks. Within hours of the birth, the baby was screened to see if he was healthy enough for a heart transplant.

He was put on a national

transplant waiting list on Jan 9, and two days later a viable heart became available.

The operation lasted 10 hours, after which he had an incision from his belly to his chest.

"From our understanding, Oliver is the youngest recipient in the nation. He received his transplant at 34 weeks and 3 days gestation."

The baby remains in hospital and his lungs remain weak but he is doing "amazingly well" at 6.1 pounds, said the hospital. — AFP

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