Gas pipeline ‘is like the PLUS highway’

KUALA LUMPUR: The RM4.6 billion Sabah-Sarawak gas pipeline project linking Kimanis in Sabah and Bintulu in Sarawak, expected to be completed by the end of 2013, will be as successful as the North-South Expressway (PLUS) linking the Peninsular Malaysia states, said a Universiti Putra Malaysia academic.

Faculty of Human Ecology deputy dean Prof Dr Jayum Jawan said the 512km pipeline, which would transport gas from the Sabah Oil and Gas Terminal in Kimanis to customers in Sabah and Petronas’ LNG complex in Bintulu, is the best example of a national project that could bring the people and business communities of Sabah and Sarawak closer to Peninsular Malaysia.

“It is an effort that fits the concept of national integration and regional unity that we have always wanted to promote. The project will meet these objectives.”

Jayum, who is from Sarawak, said the analogy with PLUS is fitting because it would widen socio-economic opportunities.

“I liken the gas pipeline project to a highway that will promote development and link the various regions in Sarawak and Sabah.

“In short, the long pipeline will bring the communities it passes through closer together.”

Jayum added that Petronas’ activities in Sarawak should be seen more holistically than just a matter of the five per cent royalty the national petroleum company paid the state government alone.

Besides the five per cent royalty, Sarawak also gained from direct investments and from Petronas’ substantial contributions to human resource development when new oil and gas fields were found, he pointed out.

“So when certain quarters call for higher royalty payments, it is as if they fail to see Petronas’ contributions in other areas such as the direct economic development which the corporation brings when new fields are found. If we take all this into consideration, it is more than five per cent.”

Jayum said Petronas and the Sarawak government needed to provide human resources with the specialised skills needed in the very competitive oil and gas sector.

“We understand Petronas as a company that emphasises meritocracy and is not bound by political or other constraints.

“But sometimes, in a plural society like ours, we need to involve as many ethnic groups from all levels and in all states as possible to satisfy all quarters,” he said.

He added that Petronas should not only be providing low-level job opportunities but also management training in specialised fields for people from Sarawak.

“From time to time, we hear calls to involve Sarawankians at the highest management level.” — Bernama