UN praises Malaysia for making strides in reducing poverty

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has received the thumbs up from the United Nations (UN) for making good strides in reducing poverty.

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, said between 1995 and 2012, the incidence of aggregate Malaysian poverty was reduced from 8.9% to 1.7% and urban poverty reduced from 3.7% to 1.0%.

Rural poverty, once a major cause of concern, had been reduced from 15.3% to 3.4%, he noted.

“Disparities in income levels among Malaysia’s 13 states and three Federal Territories have also been narrowing.

“The poorest state, Sabah, has experienced the highest reduction in poverty, from 19.7% in 2009 to 6.1% in 2012.

“The number of people living in hardcore poverty, unable to meet their basic food needs, has decreased from 0.7% in 2009 to 0.2% in 2012,” he told reporters at the end of his first official visit to Malaysia.

During his nine-day visit to assess the realisation of the right to food in Malaysia, De Schutter held consultations with several ministries.

De Schutter’s report would be presented on March 10 next year to the 47-member Human Rights Council in Geneva.

He said since 1970, the Malaysian economy had gradually transformed from an agrarian to a diversified one with manufacturing and production of processed goods and services sectors being dominant.

“Agriculture, which accounted for more than 20% of GDP in 1985, dropped to 7.3% in 2012, surpassed by other sectors of the economy including services (56.4%), manufacturing (24.9%) and mining and quarrying (8.4%) of GDP.

“By moving away from agriculture, Malaysia has seen rapid growth in urbanisation. Between 1970 and 2010, the proportion of the population living in urban areas increased from 27% to 71%,” he said. — Bernama.