KOTA KINABALU: City Hall has always been sensitive to issues affecting the disabled people (OKU) and has implemented several projects to upgrade and provide facilities for them in the vicinity of the city.

With an allocation of RM200,000 from the Ministry of Housing & Local Government in 2009, City Hall’s Planning Department has constructed ramps, installation of tactile in key pedestrian routes, construction of traffic lights and pedestrian crossings, disclosed City Mayor Datuk Abidin Madingkir.

"The disabled people are part of our community and as such, they are entitled to equal rights and opportunities to live their life as other normal people," he stated, adding that approaches based on their rights should be used to ensure the interest and wellbeing of the OKUs are protected.

He said, "It is our responsibility as normal people to jointly assist the local authority as well as the government in ensuring that OKUs could lead a comfortable and decent life."

The Mayor was speaking at the launch of the Workshop on Access Audit of Kota Kinabalu Built Environment held at the Kingfisher Learning Centre near here yesterday.

According to Abidin, City Hall had already imposed conditions over the few years for developers in respect to the approval of development and building plans which must take into account the universal design aspects and facilities for OKUs, such as the provision of car park, toilet facilities, ramps and lift.

"This is in line with the government's efforts to plan and design the facilities in urban areas which meet the access needs by all groups of people including children, senior citizen, pregnant women and the disabled," he added.

In the vicinity of the city itself, the Mayor disclosed that areas surrounding Kampung Air, the City Hall building, KK bypass road, Beach Street and Gaya Street had now been upgraded to become OKU-friendly area.

He hoped that through the workshop, awareness on the issue could be created among the community, especially professionals such as architects, engineers, landscape engineers, academicians, students, rehabilitation specialists, representatives of local authorities and individuals who champion the rights and freedoms of the OKUs.

Accordingly, he stated, the parties involved, in particular those involved in the construction industry should be given exposure and training so that disabled facilities can be implemented and applied in all development projects such as schools, housing and commercial buildings, places of worship and offices.

The workshop was jointly organised by the KAED Universal Design Unit, International Islamic Universiti and the Department of Standards Malaysia in collaboration with the Kota Kinabalu City Hall.

Present were assistant director-general of the Department of Standards Malaysia Abd Rahim Ahmad Razif, director KAED Universal Design Unit, International Islamic Universiti, Malaysia Dato' Dr Asiah Abdul Rahim, director of City Hall Planning Department Aljus Haji Sipil and Special Assistant (OKU) to the Prime Minister Raz Adiba Radzi.