

## Rentas Borneo 2016 to Puun Batu Achieves its Goal

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By Che Hasruddin Che Hasan **THURSDAY, 2 JUNE** – The 3<sup>rd</sup> ‘Rentas Borneo 2016’ (RB16) expedition



organised by the Faculty of Psychology and Education (FPP), Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FPSK) and Four Wheel Drive Volunteers Club (UMS4WDC) achieved its goal in fostering closer ties between UMS staff and the communities living in the interior of Sabah through its community service activities.

Rentas Borneo became a platform to introduce UMS to the people in the interior, crossing mountainous terrains and challenges, where UMS researchers could expand their research scope to little-known places.

The expedition chose Kg. Puun Batu, located in the Nabawan district, about 60 km from Sook and occupied by about 100 occupants.

The village has a school known as Sekolah Kebangsaan Pohon Batu with student capacity of 36 and teacher strength of only 8.

This remote village lies in a valley, the surrounding hills and natural forests are still intact with a river flowing in the middle of the village.

When the group of 29 vehicles started their journey from Keningau town at 5.00 pm, rain came down heavily and

was a challenge to traverse the long and muddy roads which invited more challenges.

Many cars were stuck and needed to be winched out, including the vehicles belonging to the villagers who were on their way back to Kg. Puun Batu.

The challenges were successfully overcome by the efficiency of drivers and members of UMS4WDC even though one vehicle suffered damage to the engine.

The RB16 entourage arrived at Kg. Puun Batu in stages beginning at 3.00 am and the last vehicle to arrive was at 4.30 am.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Joseph Kurup said that although the road leading to the village was a difficult one, the government had approved an allocation to repair and build the roads and bridges for the villagers.

"A total of RM10 million has been approved and the construction and repairing of roads is being implemented in stages to Kg. Puun Batu," he disclosed to the villagers at the opening ceremony of RB16 at SK Pohon Batu.

"Application of zinc roofs by the villagers to repair damage to their present roof has also been approved," said Tan Sri Joseph, who is also the Member of Parliament for Pensiangan.

According to Tan Sri Joseph, a total of 30 applications from 30 families had been received to repair the damages and all zinc roof brought in that day and handed over to the villagers.

Tan Sri Joseph applauded the move undertaken by UMS, for being concerned with the plight of the people in the rural areas such as in Kg. Puun Batu, who are a bit isolated.

"The arrival of Rentas Borneo participants provides sufficient exposure about Kg. Puun Batu, many of whom have not heard about. Expedition participants also visited several interesting places in the village," he said.

RB16 was the second visit for Tan Sri Joseph since becoming an MP for Pensiangan and who also flagged off the event.

Meanwhile, speaking on behalf of the villagers, Principal for SK Pohon Batu, Dennis Gampilit said, he was touched by the visit by Tan Sri Joseph who brought along good news to all the villagers.

"It is not easy to get to this village and the arrival of Tan Sri Joseph using a four-wheel drive vehicle to experience the hardship faced by the community of this village is commendable," he said to the applause of villagers and participants of RB16.

Dennis, who had just assumed the post of Principal at SK Pohon Batu 5 months ago, promised to help students and villagers to develop their village especially in terms of education for their children and to get the relevant authorities to channel development to the village.

Many community activities were also done such as health and medical screening conducted by doctors from UMS, dental examination by doctors from Nabawan, health education to children and school children, donation of new and used clothing were also distributed by the UMS4WDC and participants of RB16, friendly football match, blowpipe demonstration, top-spinning, karaoke and Unduk Ngadau.

RB16 participants also visited the nearby limestone cave and waterfall upstream which could be accessed on foot that took 45 minutes from the village.

All participants of RB16 were satisfied with the hospitality accorded by the villagers who also participated in all the activities organised. – *(fl)*