

## Muis taps UMS in boosting Zakat

By Yuzam Yusa

KOTA KINABALU: The Sabah Islamic Council (Muis) has embarked on a smart move to tap the expertise of Universiti Malaysia Sabah to boost its *zakat* collection to some RM40mil a year.

The new target for the coming few years will be a big jump from the current annual *zakat* collection of RM12mil.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) to this effect was signed between Muis, represented by its chairman Datuk Syed Abas Syed Ali, and UMS, represented by Vice Chancellor Prof. Datuk Dr Mohd Noh Dalimin, at the university's campus, here, Friday.

According to Mohd Noh in his speech, the MoU will be a platform to facilitate co-operation between the two parties in research and consultancy, seminar and *ceramah* organising, improving *zakat* collection and increasing the number of publications and reference in the matter.

"Muis is the Islamic policy planner in Sabah and formulation of policy requires relevant input and information. At times, a detailed research is needed to obtain such input and information.

"Towards this end, UMS lecturers and experts in various fields will be an alternative to obtain reliable and valid input and information," he said.

The MoU will help Muis formulate a more effective policy and more importantly, the smart partnership will promote co-operation that will contribute towards the development of the *ummah* and Sabah generally.

Meanwhile, Syed Abas told reporters that Muis is currently in discussion with the State Government to make *zakat* payment compulsory for those who qualify.

"We hope the Government will draw a Bill that will allow for automatic compulsory deduction of Government staff's salaries.

"The current practice now is by filling up a form for those who voluntarily want their salaries automatically deducted," he said, adding states like Kuala Lumpur or Selangor is already practising the compulsory automatic salary deduction.

In Sabah, there are almost 40,000 Government officers who quali-



Mohd Noh (left) and Syed Abas exchanging MoU documents while Nasir looks on.

fy to pay the *zakat* but only 2 per cent (1,200) do so, said Syed Abbas.

Muis aims to strengthen its *zakat* collection (which is still low compared with other states) and distribution in two years' time.

The council is targeting to reach a collection of RM30-40mil per year from the current RM12mil annually, and this will be made possible by the formation of the *Zakat* Collection Centre, partnership with UMS, compulsory salary deduction, etc.

Syed Abas stressed that *zakat*, like *solat*, is *wajib* (obligatory) to qualified Muslims and should not be forsaken.

He also hoped UMS would become an agent for *zakat* collection and distribution, adding needy students of UMS would also benefit from the *zakat*.