

# What and where will varsity be?

## How Sabahans see their university

By Philip Golingai

**WHERE will Sabah's university be sited. Who will staff it. What courses will it offer and what students will be able to study there.**

These are some of the questions that are ringing loud in every Sabahan's mind.

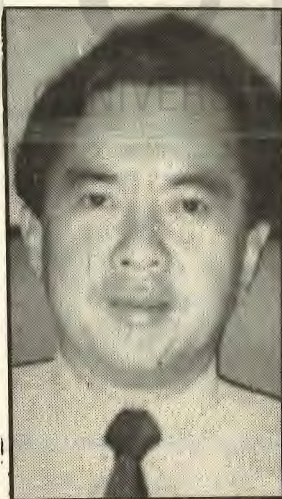
The Education Ministry is not finding it easy to decide these questions especially when Sabah already has a branch campus of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in Menggatal, about 40 kms from Kota Kinabalu state capital.

The question that comes high in the ministry, and UKM is: What is going to happen to the sprawling UKMS campus in Menggatal.

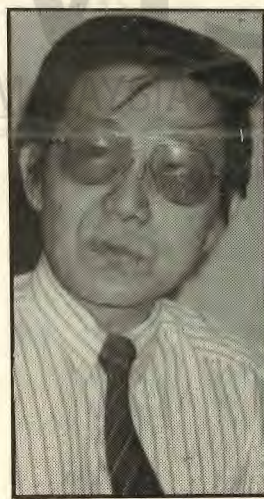
UKMS initially had their campus in Bukit Padang but shifted to Menggatal as student enrolment and demand for courses requiring more facilities outgrew the space it had at its first site.

Exact statistics of UKMS are not available but it offers some specialised courses in science that are suited to Sabah environment.

In particular, UKMS has strong marine biology, environmental, and



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zoological disciplines and had been at the forefront of research into Sabah's unique proliferation of the killer red-tides in the sea of its west coast.

Some of this research by the UKMS has been controversial like the red-tides and environmental conversation such as the breeding of the Sumatran rhinoceros threatened by extinction.

Ideally, the Education Ministry would like to turn the UKMS campus in Menggatal into the Sabah University because all the

politicians and the public are the other east coast town of Sandakan and other places in the west coast.

The Education Ministry appears to have shelved its plans to turn UKMS into the Sabah university since it has called off its proposed intake in June and use of the UKMS facilities temporarily for the new varsity.

Education Minister Datuk Amar Sulaiman Daud said the Sabah university would now be set up by July next year.

The question is what to do with the Menggatal site once the Sabah University is set up and the UKMS campus had to close?

Academics and parents in Sabah said the Sabah university can be set up at any other suitable sites in Sabah other than Kota Kinabalu where courses in the sciences and medicine will take precedence.

"They can turn the Menggatal campus into a branch campus of the Sabah university," said David Wong, a parent of two children who are entering university soon.

"It can then offer business and engineering courses such as accountancy, and civil, mechanical and electrical engineering."

infrastructure, teaching staff and students are already there.

But politically, it looks bad.

Politicians, including Chief Minister Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai, have been lobbying for a 'new' university to keep the Barisan Nasional state election pledge.

Many sites are being proposed for it, with Sakaran actively lobbying for it to be sited in the east coast timber town of Tawau.

Other sites which have been suggested by