

UMS-Mima MoU on maritime research to benefit Sabah

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Kota Kinabalu: A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed Friday between Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and the Maritime Institute of Malaysia (Mima), on cooperation and collaboration in maritime research and other related activities. The two institutions will team up in conducting studies and maritime research including addressing emerging maritime issues and concerns in the interest of the country. Speaking to reporters after witnessing the MoU signing, held at the UMS Chancellory, here, on Friday, Assistant Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment, Datuk Karim Bujang hoped it would assist the State Government in diversifying the aquaculture industry as well as in developing other marine produce sectors.

UMS Vice-Chancellor, Tan Sri Dr Abu Hassan Othman and Director-General of Mima, Datuk Cheah Kong Wai signed the MoU, witnessed by Datuk Karim, Mima Board of Director Chairman, Datuk Seri Ahmad Ramli bin Mohd Nor and Captain Mat Taib Yassin. "In comparison to other states, Sabah can be considered fortunate as it has vast potential in marine produce and aquaculture industry. But unfortunately, the sectors are not fully developed and utilised. "Unless there are steps taken to ensure enhancement and further development in both sectors, I fear the sources will be left untapped and underutilised," Karim said. He pointed out that MIMA has seen the potential in UMS' facilities in realising maritime work and research. Earlier in his speech, Karim stressed that with such an enormous expanse of sea around the country, maritime responsibilities were heavy and challenging. "Maritime issues are of particular interest to Malaysia because of our enormous marine territory. Our country's coastline is as large as 4,800km extending from the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea in the Pacific Ocean. "Furthermore, Malaysia's marine area (332,673 square km) is even larger than the inland territory (330,434 square km). Therefore the maritime tasks are too extensive for just one institution to handle, and hence a dire need for other national institutions to share the responsibilities," he said. He said educational institutions such as UMS could play a pivotal role in advising Mima or other national agencies that require intellectual inputs from academia. He added that academic institutions could render their services in sustainable utilisation of marine resources, environmental management, education dissemination and developing feasible ways and means to deal with social and economic problems. "While agricultural scientists are doing what they can, the marine scientists and fisheries experts can contribute a great deal by developing new practically feasible ideas and methods, replacing those which have failed to stand the test of ground realities. "We must assess our marine bounties, develop sea ranching as a modern tool of sustainable fisheries management, lay down a framework for stock enhancement and sea ranching through government and community participation," he emphasised. Meanwhile, Abu Hassan told reporters that signing of the MoU would provide for correct data and information, which would be useful in giving inputs to policy-making. "This is the strength portrayed by our marine research institute and Mima in carrying out collaborative research that we collect and can be given back as inputs to the policy makers for further consideration.