

UMS, DBP begin strategic collaboration to organise multi-ethnic literature seminar

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KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is well-positioned to serve as a platform for discourse on multi-ethnic literature in Malaysia, owing to its location in Sabah – a state renowned for its rich ethnic and cultural diversity.

Its Vice-Chancellor, Professor Datuk Dr Kasim Hj Mansor expressed strong support for a strategic partnership with Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) in elevating the role of language and literature as vital instruments for shaping national identity, critical thought and social cohesion.

“Malaysia is a multicultural nation blessed with a wealth of cultural, linguistic and literary heritage,” he said in a speech when officiating the **Multi-Ethnic Literature Discourse**, co-organised by UMS’s **Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language (PPIB)** and DBP, held at the UMS Digital Department on Wednesday.

The Vice-Chancellor’s speech was delivered by PPIB Dean, Professor Datuk Dr Ismail Ali.

Kasim emphasized that the discourse serves as a cross-cultural intellectual platform, crucial in a diverse nation such as Malaysia. He highlighted that literature is not merely aesthetic expression, but a reflection of a people’s soul – capturing history, advocating for justice, and bridging differences.

“I hope this Multi-Ethnic Literature Discourse will go beyond being a one-off academic event and act as a catalyst for a broader national effort to strengthen inclusive literature, while amplifying voices from communities often marginalised from the mainstream,” he added.

Earlier, DBP Sabah director Jennitah Noordin welcomed the strategic collaboration, expressing hopes that the event would become an annual fixture, starting this year in conjunction

with DBP’s 69th anniversary.

“As the agency tasked with advancing the national language and literature, DBP hopes this discourse can be compiled into scholarly documentation to ensure its insights and benefits reach a wider audience,” she said.

Jennitah also expressed confidence that the close collaboration between UMS and DBP would raise multi-ethnic literature to new heights – not only in terms of appreciation, but also as a field of knowledge, cultural heritage and a unifying force in society.

The event featured four presentations moderated by Dr Henry Bating, with keynote address from SEA Write Award recipient Datuk Jasni Matlani, alongside Lau Yoke Lian (Chinese Literature), Dr Bavani Arumugam @ Seiyalu (Tamil Literature) and Nuri Hermawan (Sabahan Ethnic Literature – Duharung Paragasu).



From left: Nuri Hermawan, Datuk Jasni Matlani, Prof Dr Ismail Ali, Jennitah Noordin, Dr Bavani, Dr Henry Bating, and Lau Yoke Lian.