

KTS Group's Henry Lau receives honorary doctorate for pioneering sustainable forestry efforts

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KOTA KINABALU: KTS Group managing director Dato Henry Lau Lee Kong has been selected to receive an Honorary Doctor of Philosophy in Forestry in conjunction with Universiti Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) 27th Convocation Ceremony, in recognition of his longstanding commitment to forest conservation, sustainable forestry practices and academic research in tropical forest ecosystems dating back to 1993.

By funding the endowed chair, Lau has ensured long-term support for education, research and innovation in the forestry field, while helping to nurture future leaders and experts in sustainable forest management.

He has a broad philosophy of using business and philanthropy through education, research and field practices to empower communities while protecting natural resources, ensuring that forests remain a foundation for ecological, social and economical balance on a sustainable basis.

Lau became Managing Director of the KTS Group in 2000 and also serves as Executive Chairman of BLD Plantation Bhd, a company listed on Bursa Malaysia.

A graduate in engineering

from the University of Adelaide, Australia, he is also a member of the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers Australia.

One of his most impactful contributions has been his advocacy for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). He believes that the long-term sustainability of the timber industry depends on achieving a balance between economic growth and environmental preservation.

In Sabah, Lau pioneered an SFM model based entirely on Natural Forest Management (NFM). Although initially viewed as less profitable by conventional timber industry standards, the model has now gained recognition from the Sabah Forestry Department, regulators and forest certification bodies.

The success of the NFM model at the Sustainable Long-term Forest Reserve (SLFR) has been recognised by various organisations, including the Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC): Leadership in Sustainability Award (2019) and the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC): Environmental Excellence and Sustainability Award (2022).

Forestry operations at KTS Plantation Sdn Bhd have also received recognition through certifications such as the

Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS), Environmental Management System (EMS ISO 14001) and the Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS), based on international forest management standards.

KTS Plantation Sdn Bhd is the first private company in Malaysia's forestry sector to receive both MTCS and ISO certifications.

Meanwhile, in his acceptance speech, Lau said the journey in Sustainable Forest Management has been both long and challenging through learning, trial and error amid little or no experience.

"Yet, through relentless commitment, perseverance from the investor, directors and management of KTS Plantations Sdn Bhd and very importantly the determined supporting policies and the cooperation and encouragement and vision from Sabah Forest Department, KTS Plantation at Segaluid Lokan achieved respectful outcome," he said.

He also said with regards to the collaboration with UMS, from an industry perspective, they value the importance of progression of Sustainable Forest Management through research and development.

"By combining the scientific

expertise of UMS and guidance of Sabah Forestry Department, a powerful recipe of success for KTS Plantation to leap forward in Sustainable Forest Management."

He said the journey began in 2016 and renewed in 2023 for another five years ensuring a continue of collaboration in area like undergraduate research and industry training.

Lau added that the success of the UMS-KTSP collaboration was not built overnight.

"It is the result of years of trust, partnership, and a synergistic win-win strategy."

"As we move forward, the next five years under Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) 2.0 and Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) 2.0 will mark a new milestone. While the MoU continues our broad collaboration, the MoA is specifically designed to empower excellent academics and aspiring young foresters to conduct high-impact research," he said.

He also said that their focus will include pioneering the application of Drone and GIS technology in forest operations – objectives that align perfectly with the Sabah Forest Policy 2018.

"This new phase is expected to benefit at least five postgraduates



Lau (left) receiving the Honorary Doctor of Philosophy in Forestry from UMS pro chancellor, Tan Sri Azman Hashim.

and 15 undergraduates, while also enriching learning and teaching at the Faculty of Tropical Forestry."