



Some of the bones found by fishermen at the beach of Pulau Tiga. (Left): Children at the village displaying the bones found.

## UMS researchers check out skeletal remains of prehistoric marine reptile

**KOTA KINABALU:** The skeletal remains of a prehistoric marine reptile that resembles a cross between a turtle and a snake could have been found by a group of fishermen on a beach at Survivor Island of Pulau Tiga, off Kuala Penyu.

The find has prompted a team of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) researchers led by Prof Felix Tongkul to comb the island's beach yesterday for more bones of the creature whom the fishermen believe had been dead for about a month.

When shown a picture of skeleton of a Plesiosaur marine reptile said to date back to the Triassic period about 200

million years ago, fisherman Helmi Hassan said there was a strong resemblance of its skull and that of the one he found on Pulau Tiga on March 30.

"The upper part of the creature's skull we found was about the size of a sepak takraw ball with a beak-like mouth measuring just over 0.3 metre," he said when met at his home in Kampung Binsuluk, Membakut yesterday.

Helmi said he and his fellow fishermen had gone out to sea at about 8am on that day and spotted the bones soon after

■Continued in Page 2

## Bones scattered over 10-metre stretch on beach

TBP 08.04.2006 P. 1&2

■ From Page One

landing at Pulau Tiga seven hours later and initially thought they were from either a whale or a dugong.

"But when we came across its skull that look a bit like a crocodile, we know this was a different creature altogether," he said.

Helmi added that the bones scattered over a 10-metre stretch on the beach, and they dragged some of the bones into a nearby bushes and took the skull with them.

Another villager, Hibatur Rahman

Abdul Rashid, a laboratory assistant at the UMS School of Science and Technology, took the skull and handed it over to Prof Tongkul.

The fishermen meanwhile brought about 30 pieces of the bones from Pulau Tiga to Hibatur Rahman's house at Kampung Binsuluk on Thursday (April 6).

Among the 30 bones were two pieces each measuring more than two metres while another 12 pieces each measuring about one metre that appeared to be rib bones.

The fishermen also brought what appeared to be a six platter-shaped bones and a shoulder blade bone.

Another fishermen who found the bones was Baharom Bidin, who said he saw some remaining patches of the creature's skin which he described as "leathery" and dark grey in colour.

"At first I thought I would like to take some of the bones home to make a sort of decoration but I've changed my mind since this creature is unknown," he added.