

RESEARCH ON ANTIDOTE FOR RED TIDE TOXINS

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By YATIM TAUBATAL ANDAM

KOTA KINABALU: After identifying two new red tide species in Sepanggar Bay, scientists from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) will continue their research to find an antidote to toxins produced by the harmful algal species.

UMS Vice Chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Noh Dalimin said the follow-up research will be carried out by the university's Borneo Marine Research Institute (BMRI) together with other marine research agencies and the Health Ministry.

BMRI's research findings will be submitted to the state government as well as the ministry sponsoring the research, Dr Mohd Noh said, adding red tide blooms are a public health issue in the state.

"After they presented their findings in December last year, BMRI's research team has been strengthened to ensure their findings would benefit all quarters," he told reporters after launching UMS' website at the main

campus in Teluk Likas near here yesterday.

On Saturday, Prof Datin Dr Ann Anton, who heads BMRI's harmful algal bloom research group, was reported as saying that the team identified two new species of red tide in Sepanggar Bay - *Cochlodinium polikrikoïdes* and *Gymnodinium catenatum*.

C. polikrikoïdes is not known to produce harmful toxins, but its cells clog up the gills of fishes, killing them by asphyxiation, and consuming the dead fish is not a health hazard.

G. catenatum, on the other hand, is said to produce paralytic shellfish poison (PSP) which is readily accumulated by mussels and oysters.

Consuming the affected shellfish could result in neurological and gastrointestinal problems, and in severe cases, even death.

BMRI director Prof. Dr Saleem Mustafa suggested that the team monitor the presence of *G. catenatum* in the state's coastal waters and give research priority to the chemistry of the toxin, saying it is easily accumulated by mussels, oysters and other suspension feeders.



Dr Mohd Noh (centre) launching the website as (from left) deputy vice chancellor (academic and international relations) Prof Dr Haji Sanudin Tahir, registrar Hela Ladin Mohd Noh, Effendy and bursar Rizal Othman look on