

UMS sets up natural disaster research centre

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KOTA KINABALU: A natural disaster research centre which is set to become the focal point for research on disasters in Sabah ranging from earthquakes, landslips to floods, has been set up by Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

Dr Felix Tongkul of UMS School of Science and Technology said the centre comprising academics from different fields of expertise hopes to be able to assist the Government's efforts in mitigating and coping with natural disasters.

"The focus of the centre would be to study and mitigate problems related to landslips commonly occurring in Sabah, create early flood warning systems and also study ways to overcome erosions along rivers and beaches," he said to some 200 participants attending a seminar on

Climate Variability, Climate Change and Global Warming in Malaysia.

He said other areas would also include forecasting drought, drawing up forest fire mitigation plans and helping to develop a policy and planning response for earthquakes and tsunami hazards in Malaysia.

The half-day seminar held at the State Assembly building was organised by the Chief Minister's Department as part of its preparation for the coming El-Nino expected to start in April until September.

Among the other aims of the centre include better understanding of the various causes of natural disasters to help to find ways of mitigating and anticipating a particular disaster.

"We hope to set up a data bank and information centre for public reference on disasters," Dr Felix

said, adding that the centre is also working with relevant agencies to create public awareness through workshops and seminars.

Among the studies which have started this year were geological studies on active fault lines in Ranau and Lahad Datu, slope failure investigations in Kota Kinabalu, coastal and geomorphologic studies of selected areas in eastern Sabah for tsunami impact.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Associate Professor Dr Fredolin Tanggang delivered a paper on "Climate Change and the Global Warming Phenomenon" during the seminar which discussed various changes in world temperatures, including in Malaysia.

The seminar was officiated by State Secretary Datuk KY Mustafa.