

UMS team finds rare shark

Marine creature not seen in Borneo for over 100 years

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KOTA KINABALU: A rare and endangered shark, not scientifically reported for more than a century, is among marine creatures that have been discovered by Universiti Malaysia Sabah researchers.

UMS vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Dr Mohd Noh Dalimin said that apart from the Borneo shark, scientifically known *Carcharhinus borneensis*, the university's researchers have also discovered a new species of crab and ray fish.

The university's Borneo Marine Research Institute director Prof Dr Saleem Mustafa said the discoveries reflected the diversity of marine life in the waters around the world's third largest island.

Dutch scientist Dr Pieter Bleeker first recorded the Borneo shark in the Sabah east coast district of Sandakan in 1859, Dr Saleem said in a press statement.

There had not been any further record of it until a recent survey of fishery resources along the coastal areas of Sabah and Sarawak, he said.

The Borneo shark, brown on the top half of the body and white on the belly half, is said to reach lengths of up to 2m.

It is also said to be a rare viviparous species, which gives birth to living offspring.

On the new crab species, Dr Saleem said UMS researchers found it at a swamp in Likas barely 2km from the city centre in 2005.

In a related development, UMS vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Mohd Noh Dalimin warned that sharks

»There is now an over-harvesting of sharks«

DR MOHD NOH DALIMIN

could eventually be listed as extinct, at least in the state.

The problem was due to the harvesting of fins from sharks, demand for which continued unabated, he said.

"There is now an over-harvesting of sharks," Dr Mohd Noh said, following the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Sabah Fisheries Department, UMS and the Fishermen's Development Cooperative (Ko-Nelayan).

The memorandum was for the development of aquaculture activities by Ko-Nelayan, based on UMS research efforts.

Dr Mohd Noh said UMS marine researchers were ready to assist the state authorities in formulating conservation measures for sharks and other threatened animals such as turtles.

State Agriculture and Food Industry Minister Datuk Abdul Rahim Ismail said enforcement was being stepped up to catch those illegally harvesting sharks for their fins.