

UMS Scientists Discover World's First 'Horn-Shaped' Fungus Species

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LAHAD DATU, April 12 (Bernama) -- A team of researchers from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) created history in the world of science when they discovered a new horn-shaped fungus species in the Danum Valley Conservation Area in Lahad Datu recently.

The new species, named *Pleurocordyceps cornusynnemata*, has been confirmed as the first of its kind globally after publication in the international taxonomy journal *Phytotaxa*.

Assoc Prof Dr Jaya Seelan Sathiya Seelan from the UMS Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ITBP) said the fungus is distinguished by its horn-like structure, thereby setting it apart from 26 other *Pleurocordyceps* species previously recorded in China, Thailand and Japan.

Ad Banner

"In the study, our team also recorded two other fungi, namely *Pleurocordyceps aurantiaca* and *Pleurocordyceps nipponica*, which are recorded in Malaysia for the first time," he said in a statement today.

The research team was led by Dr Jaya Seelan, in collaboration with two postgraduate students – Muhammad Shahbaz (PhD candidate) and Firdza Zulkarnain Mohadden (Master's student) – and citizen scientist Elyse Yang, in addition to a researcher from Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) Dr Yap Jing Wei and student Jeremiah Sia Yiao Rong.

The fungus specimens have now been stored at the BORNEENSIS ITBP UMS storage centre as a scientific reference for the future.

Meanwhile, UMS Vice-Chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Kasim Mansor, in the same statement, said the discovery demonstrated the ability of local scientists in leading high-impact research at an international level.

He said the success was also in line with the university's aspirations under its "Brain of Borneo" vision in empowering the exploration and conservation of Sabah's biodiversity treasures.

Meanwhile, ITBP director Assoc Prof Dr Fiffy Hanisdah Saikim described the achievement as the result of developing young researcher talent, as well as proof that Sabah's tropical rainforest is still rich in species that have not been fully explored.

The study received support from the UMSGreat grant, and cooperation from the Sabah Forestry Department and Yayasan Sabah under the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP) project.