

Scientists discover new horn-like fungus species in Danum Valley

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KOTA KINABALU: A team of researchers from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has discovered a new horn-like fungus species in the Danum Valley Conservation Area in Lahad Datu.

The species, *Pleurocordyceps cornusynnemata*, was confirmed as new after publication in the taxonomy journal *Phytotaxa*.

The finding strengthens Malaysia's position as a global biodiversity hub and shows much of the country's natural heritage remains to be documented.

The UMS Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation team was led by Associate Professor Dr Jaya Seelan Sathiya Seelan.

He said the species is notable for its horn-like structure, which distinguishes it from 26 other *Pleurocordyceps* species previously recorded in China, Thailand and Japan.

"In addition to this new world species, our team also recorded two other fungi, *Pleurocordyceps aurantiaca* and *Pleurocordyceps nipponica*, which are being reported for the first time in Malaysia," he said.

The research team included postgraduate students Muhammad Shahbaz (PhD candidate) and Firdza Zulkarnain Mohadden (Master's student).

Citizen scientist Elyse Yang co-discovered the species with the team in the Infapro area of Danum Valley.

The study was carried out with collaborators from Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, including Dr Yap Jing Wei and PhD student Jeremiah Sia Yiao Rong.

UMS vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Kasim Mansor said the achievement reflected the university's 'Brain of Borneo' vision and showed local scientists can lead high-impact research that attracts international attention.