

Sabah Tourist Guides Association ticks off UMS programme head

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KOTA KINABALU: Sabah Tourist Guides Association (STGA) is saddened by the vague and unfair statement by Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Tourism Management Programme head Roseni Ariffin who had said during a tourism event at the university campus that Sabah tourist guides still have to improve themselves.

STGA chairman Daniel Doughty said: "Not just tourist guides need to improve,

everyone does. This include tourism lecturers in UMS. We must acknowledge that whoever completes the tourist guide course will not come out being the best."

He added that it is because of Sabah tourist guides that tourism in Sabah and in Malaysia is as vibrant as it is today.

"There have been numerous times that Sabahans win the best tourist guide awards and known to be the most hospitable,

knowledgeable and professional guides in Malaysia.

"We must not forget that almost all of the exciting eco-tourism related products and services are in Sabah, hence Sabah has the most guides in Malaysia specializing in various fields and topic, particularly eco related. I wish to also remind her that Sabah is not so much of a shopping destination.

"Over so many years of the marketing excellence implemented by Sabah

Tourism, the ministry and travel agents, we now see tourists from all over the world. We often forget that it is because of the dynamics of Sabah's professional tourist guides that tourists frequently return to the state.

"Since the early days of tourism in Sabah, almost all of the exciting tourism products in Sabah are designed by tourist guides. They then move on being a travel agent and many still remain as a member in our

association.

"We too acknowledge that foreign language speaking guides are part of those challenges and demand needed in this industry. We need to find the right and better solution to this issue than just sending our members to a language class here in Kota kinabalu.

"I would also like to suggest that since she sees the shortfalls in our profession, to engage and have dialogue with STGA to identify solution to all our

challenges so as to propel the profession to excellence. To begin with, we hope that she could take the lead and guide us to establish opportunity for experienced guides to have scholarship and aim toward getting a PhD on a certain topic," he said.

Doughty said STGA members are excited to work closely with UMS and are confident that together, they could solve the shortage of foreign language speaking tourist guides in Sabah.