



Othman (right) presenting dividend to the representative of Bagahak smallholders in Lahad Datu, witnessed by Musa during the breaking of fast yesterday.

# Sawit Kinabalu, UMS to do joint oil palm R&D

BP 05-08-2012 45

By Murib Morpi

**KOTA KINABALU:** State-owned company Sawit Kinabalu Group inked a memorandum of understanding with Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) to pursue new collaboration opportunities in oil palm industry.

The agreement covers research and development (R&D) activities related to oil palm, industrial training, seminars, exchange of information and materials as well as commercialization of research findings.

The Group's managing director Othman Walat and UMS vice chancellor Prof Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah signed the MoU for their respective parties, witnessed by Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman.

Musa, who is also Sawit Kinabalu Group chairman, said UMS and Sawit Kinabalu's move to officially ink their partnership was timely and in line with the State Government's policy of emphasising on sustainable economic development.

He said there was still plenty of room for developing the oil palm industry in Sabah, in particular in value added products and services.

As such, research findings and products to be derived from the MoU would generate intellect properties that can be commercialized for the industry.

"We understand that the natural resources and vast, fertile land we have is the core aspect propelling the State's economic growth.

"As such, I would like to remind us all to always adopt a balanced and sustainable approach in every



Othman (second right) exchanging the MoU documents with Dr Mohd Harun, witnessed Musa at the signing ceremony yesterday. - Photo by Aniq Azraei

development project," he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Mohd Harun said the partnership between UMS and Sawit Kinabalu has started since over a decade ago where various joint venture projects have been successfully conducted.

The signing of the MoU, he added, would enable the scope of collaboration to be further expanded to cover the whole oil palm industry.

Harun also announced that UMS, in collaboration with Sawit Kinabalu, will be setting up a Sustainable Palm Oil Research Unit (SPOR) to lead in R&D involving palm oil.

"Compared to other palm oil research institutions, SPOR will emphasize more on sustainable and comprehensive researches starting from the planting process to environmental issues associated with palm oil.

"SPOR will also gather experts in multi-discipline to conduct environmental friendly research, utilise Borneo's natural resources

in solving local issues including disease control for ganoderma," he said.

With the collaboration, UMS is in a good position to carry out research and practical training in 70,000 hectares of Sawit Kinabalu plantations, mostly located in the east coast.

At the ceremony, Musa also presented a contribution of RM1 million from Sawit Kinabalu for sponsorship of a comprehensive Newspaper-In-Education Programme at 48 selected schools and two universities in Sabah.

The programme, conducted as part of the company's corporate social responsibility, will involve distribution of 512,500 copies of Malay and English national dailies.

The Chief Minister also presented dividend payment of RM6.68 million for oil palm smallholders from Begahak and another RM215,000 for smallholders from Silabukan at the event.