

Engage with the community: UMS VC

By NOR AIN HASSAN
nor@newsabah-
times.com.my

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) School of Psychology has been urged to engage in more community development.

With the expertise in understanding human behaviour, it is important to focus on practical and not merely theoretical aspect of behaviour.

"With this involvement I believe the school can help to improve the psychological well-being of the people," UMS vice-chancellor Prof Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah said when opening the South East Asia Psychology (SEAP) Conference 2012 in Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) yesterday.

He also disclosed that based on a current research by the School of Psychology, 49.8 per cent of respondents at secondary schools in Sabah suffered from mild mental problem.

"For a start I urge the school to focus on certain rural areas in Sabah and take it as a pioneer model to improve the psychological well-being of the local people.

"This should be the main contribution of the school to the indigenous community in Sabah," Dr Harun added.

The dean of the school As-

NST 27-09-2012 4
sociate Professor Dr Murnizam Hj Halik told reporters after the opening of the conference that it was important for parents to detect early symptoms of emotional or mental disorder.

"It does not mean that a person is crazy if he has mental problem. He or she might be having stress or depression which could lead them to suicide," he warned.

"If we are able to detect the signs earlier, we can identify and provide programmes which can improve their psychological well-being," he said.

Dr Murnizam also said the conference aimed to increase awareness among parents on their children's mental health.

"At the moment, the number of mental health cases in Sabah is still low but we urge parents to pay attention to their children's behavior," he added.

Dr Murnizam also said as the largest psychology school in Malaysia, UMS was offering free counseling service to help the public in any psychological-related issue.

The public can contact the school at 088-320000 ext 8145 for counselling service.

Meanwhile, Dr Harun also said the conference was a platform for the participants to exchange ideas and strengthen relations among psychologists not only in Southeast Asia but

around the globe as well.

The three day SEAP Conference 2012, themed "Unity through Diversity" is jointly organised by UMS, Universitas Padjajaran Bandung Indonesia, Deakin University Australia, Asian Association of Indigenous Psychology and Malaysia Psychology Association.

A total of 356 research papers will be presented and 18 students were awarded Dean's Award for their outstanding quality of research paper yesterday.

Also present was UMS deputy vice-chancellor, Prof Dr Sharil Yusof.



Dr Harun (2nd left) presenting the Dean's Award to one of the winners, watched by Dr Shahril (left) and Dr Murnizam (2nd right)