

By MOHD IZHAM HASHIM

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) will enhance its forestry studies at its Faculty of Sciences and Natural Sciences (FSSA) by improving interdisciplinary research and increasing programmes relevant to industry.

“Forestry education is imperative for advancing efforts in sustainable forest management and UMS will increase focus on improving its forestry programme by enhancing interdisciplinary interaction with other fields of expertise and engagement with strategic industries,” said UMS Deputy Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. D Kamarudin D. Mudin.

Meeting reporters yesterday after launching the UMS World Forestry Day 2016, he underlined the FSSA will be expanding its curriculum and enhancing industry-engagement which would increase interest and enrolment into forestry education programmes.

Earlier in his keynote address, UMS Vice Chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Harun Abdullah underlined the importance of instilling greater awareness on conservation of forest resources and environmental protection to fight climate change and global warming.

“The effects of global warming are being felt around the world, including Sabah which recently faced severe drought spells due to the El-Niño phenomenon, therefore this 7th World Forestry Day 2016 is vitally important to preserve and protect our invaluable natural forests and environment,” he said. The text of his speech was delivered by Prof. Dr Kamarudin.

The World Forestry Day 2016 at the FSSA building was attended by over 150 students and lecturers and was marked by a tree-planting ceremony by Prof Dr. D



Pro Dr D. Kamarudin (center) together with Dr Safie (right) and Dr Berhaman (left) planting a rainforest tree to mark World Forestry Day.

Kamarudin, accompanied by Dr. Berhaman and Dr Safie Salleh, Acting Dean of the FSSA.

Meanwhile, Chairman of World Forest Day 2016, Dr. Berhaman Ahmad highlighted the faculty is collaborating closely with key players in the forestry industry, including Bornion Timber which a holder of the Forest Management Unit (FMU) certificates and Sabah Forest Industries (SFI) among others.

“We provide industrial training for students enrolled in our forestry education programmes for a period of 6 months before they graduate,” he said.

Dr. Berhaman revealed UMS is also involved in a long-term reforestation project with Yayasan Sabah involving about 82,000 hectares of degraded forest in Luasong, Tawau which is also an ini-

tiative sponsored by IKEA, a renowned Swedish furniture and home furnishing retail company who pledged RM7 million for replanting efforts in the area.

According to Dr Berhaman, this initiative founded since 2000 is already undergoing phase 4 of the project with IKEA spending almost RM4 million every year for research and replanting efforts with Yayasan Sabah for the last 16 years while UMS joined the project in 2010.

“UMS uses molecular studies to identify and select best mother trees for replanting in the area and we also have the LIDAR system, the most advanced surveying system in the state which is a technology used to make high resolution maps, make carbon stock of the spatial area and more applications,” he said.