

UMS collaborates with Murdoch University on tourism research

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KOTA KINABALU: BIMP-EAGA Unit for Tourism Development under the Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has signed a MoU with Murdoch University, Perth Australia to embark joint efforts in tourism research in Lower Kinabatangan region which took place on Sep 7, 2016 at Bilik Mesyuarat Naib Canselor in UMS Campus.

The signing signifies the strategic direction and efforts of UMS to strengthen one of its niche research areas, namely tourism through BIMP-EAGA Unit for Tourism Development.

The unit for tourism development aims to bolster UMS niche research area through close collaboration with renowned academics, industry experts and practitioners active in tourism and hospitality, conduct research that address the real tourism issues as well as contributes to the sustainable development of tourism industry in Borneo and the region.

The signing of this MoU provides greater access and opportunities to encourage and promote co-operation between UMS and Murdoch University in the areas related to tourism research, publication, staff and student exchange.

One of the collaborative research activities as part of the MoU already in progress is Kinabatangan River Wildlife Tourism Visitor Survey which commenced on last August with the involvement of academic staff; Prof. Dr. David Newsome, Dr. Kate Roger from Murdoch University and Prof. Dr. Jennifer Chan, BIMP - EAGA Unit for Tourism Development.

The survey examines the tourism experience and understands the social dimensions of wildlife tourism activities to achieve effective management of the ac-



UMS Vice Chancellor Prof. Datuk Dr. Mohd. Harun Abdullah exchanges the MoU document with Prof. Dr. David Newsome, Murdoch University after signing the MOU document, with the presence of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Raman Noordin, Dean of Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy (2nd left) and Prof Dr. Jennifer Chan Kim Lian, Head of BIMP-EAGA Unit for Tourism Development (front, 2nd right) with Mr. Alexander Yee, President of KiTA and Mr. Albert Teo, committee member of KiTA.

tivities as well as a sustainable industry. It is divided into two phases, the first phase was completed in March 2016 and second will commence on October 2016 and follow with a seminar and workshop based on the research outcome early next year.

Widely, wildlife tourism has gained popularity amongst the tourists. It is considered as a means of transitioning local economies from unsustainable consumptive use of resources to more sustainable non-consumptive uses.

In the context of Lower Kinabatangan, the tour operators and managers in the industry need to understand the needs and expectations of tourist who are investing

time and money to undertake wildlife tours which can give insight for future management and decision-making.

In the same vein, it is vital to minimise negative impacts on the target species whilst providing an enjoyable tourism experience. Importance performance analysis was used to examine the attributes or features of importance to the visitor and how satisfied visitors are with these attributes – how they performed.

The first phase of research finding was presented to Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment Sabah, Sabah Tourism Board, tour operators in Lower Kinabatangan, academic staff and students at UMS. – (PR)