

Joint tourism research in Kinabatangan

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KOTA KINABALU: The BIMP-EAGA Unit for Tourism Development under the Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Murdoch University, Perth, Australia to conduct joint tourism research in Lower Kinabatangan region.

The signing on September 7 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 strengthen UMS niche research area through close collaboration with renowned academics, industry experts and practitioners active in tourism and hospitality; and to conduct research that addresses the real tourism issues and contributes to the sustainable development of tourism industry in Borneo and the region.



Dr Harun exchanging the MoU document with Dr Newsome. Seen with them are Dr Raman (second from left), Dr Jennifer Chan (second right), Yee (fourth left) and Teo (third right).

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 the Kinabatangan River Wildlife

Tourism Visitor Survey which commenced last August with the involvement of academic staff – Professor Dr David Newsome and Dr Kate Roger from Murdoch University and Professor Dr

Jennifer Chan, BIMP-EAGA Unit for Tourism Development.

The survey examines the tourism experience and to understand the social dimensions of wildlife tourism activities to achieve effective management of the activities and a sustainable industry. It is divided into two phases, the first phase was completed in March 2016 and second will commence on October 2016; subsequently, follow up 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 tourists who are investing time and money to undertake wildlife

tours that can give insight for future management and decision-making.

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

The first phase of research finding was presented to the Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister, Sabah Tourism Board, tour operators in Lower Kinabatangan and academic staff and students at UMS. Also present at the event were Dean of Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy Associate Professor Dr Raman Noordin, Head of BIMP-EAGA Unit for Tourism Development Professor Dr Jennifer Chan Kim Lian, KiTA president Alexander Yee and KiTA committee member Albert Teo.