

# Seagrass transplantation project in Sepanggar Bay

BP 24.10.2018 3

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**KOTA KINABALU:** Sabah Ports Sdn Bhd once again engaged the Borneo Marine Research Institute (BMRI) of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) in marine conservation by collaborating on a seagrass transplantation project.

A sum of RM20,000 was provided by Sabah Ports for the initiative, which includes the setting up of a seagrass transplanting simulation at the BMRI Aquarium and Museum located within the university compound.

UMS Deputy Vice Chancellor (research and innovation) Professor Dr Shahril Yusof, at the mock cheque presentation ceremony yesterday, said the project would involve transplanting seagrass population found within the Sepanggar Bay vicinity to a new location.

"The aim of the project is to safeguard Sepanggar Bay's seagrass inheritance from further degradation and impact by future development that is expected to take place within the Sepanggar vicinity.

"The restoration is expected to increase seagrass coverage in the Kota Kinabalu coastal area as well as lend support to marine life habitat.

"This contribution will help us improve seagrass research and conservation," he said in



Ng and Rossita after the cheque presentation for the seagrass transplantation project, a corporate social responsibility initiative between Sabah Ports and the Borneo Marine Research Institute of UMS.

his welcome remarks which were delivered by BMRI director Professor Dr Rossita Shapawi.

He further said seagrass meadows decline at a rate of seven per cent globally each year while approximately two football field sizes of seagrass disappears in every 30 minutes.

"Negative impacts of climate change such as increased water temperature, ocean acidification and increasing frequency of storms reduce seagrass cover around the globe.

"Unsustainable coastal development, change of land use, destructive fishing methods and anchor damage by boats accelerating are among what activates degradation of seagrass meadows as well.

"Only by increasing awareness can better seagrass management and policies be

established for short-and-long-term benefits," he added.

Shahril said the partnership between Sabah Ports and UMS was to initiate seagrass transplantation by using seagrass sprig or bare shoot, plug and seedling.

The main challenges expected will be to understand the complexity of ecosystem interaction between biotic and abiotic factors, as well as different transplanting techniques.

Suria Capital Holdings Berhad group managing director cum Sabah Ports managing director Ng Kiat Min reiterated that the project entails transplanting seagrass population found within the development boundary to a new location, as an effort to conserve the site's environmental contribution.

"The biologically rich precinct is expected to be impacted by development and degrade unless sustainable and protective steps are taken.

"Our main objective is to safeguard Sepanggar Bay's biological inheritance as well as comply with any environmental prerequisites with regard to Sabah Ports' future plan to develop the Sepanggar area," she said.

Moving forward, the scope of work for BMRI will include a workshop on proper transfer techniques, actual transplantation works and a year-long monitoring of the relocated seagrass.

The transplantation work is expected to involve members of the BMRI faculty and students, Sabah Ports employees as well as members from the local community.