

Tambisan Island – another upcoming top eco tourism destination

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KOTA KINABALU: The natural wonders of Tambisan Island steps closer to becoming one of Sabah's top eco tourism destinations for tourists - offering immense economic benefits for local folk and help them protect the environment.

With its pristine coral reefs and marine wildlife, rich local cultures, mangrove forest habitat of proboscis monkeys, Tambisan Island is set to become another major tourist attraction with yesterday's signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and Tambisan Travel Tours Sdn Bhd.

"This agreement paves the way forward for community-based tourism at Tambisan Island in bringing numerous high-impact opportunities for village folk which would transform their socioeconomic status and promote awareness on the importance of conserving their natural resources," said UMS Vice Chancellor, Prof. Datuk Dr D. Kamarudin

Furthermore he noted the MOU signing will encourage and recognise the contribution of researchers, industry and local communities for their support of the implementation of the Malaysian New Economic Model (NEM) which aims to establish a knowledgeable and high-in-



Prof Shahril (2nd from right) exchanging MOUs with Hj Antin, witnessed by Assafal (3rd from right) at the MOU signing ceremony yesterday between Tambisan Travel and Tours with UMS.

come country. The text of his speech was read by Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Shahri Yusoff.

Tambisan Island is situated on Sabah's east coast on the district of Lahad Datu, is a tropical island getaway with much potential amid growing tourist arrivals to Sabah.

The MOU agreement was signed between Prof Shahril and Hj Antin Ismail, Managing Director of Tambisan Travel and Tours Sdn Bhd.

Lauding the initiative, Assistant Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment Assafal P. Alian said the collaboration is another important step to conserve Sabah's rich natural attractions by turning them into

eco-tourism destinations.

"This offers new prospects for local people of Kampung Tambisan, who are mostly fishermen, to venture into ecotourism to attract tourists, and this will help them increase their daily income and uplift their livelihood," he said.

Elaborating further, Assafal said ecotourism opens manifold new possibilities for kampung folk who can develop attractive activities for tourists to enjoy the rich marine flora and fauna on the island, such as snorkelling, diving and sport-fishing.

"Community-based tourism brings together local communities, and when they see the benefit from eco-

tourism, they would realise the importance of conserving the environment and protect its flora and fauna," he said.

With the agreement, Assafal highlighted stronger cooperation between researchers, industry and community would also help kampung folk to acquire knowledge and skills to support their tourism activities on the island.

"University students who are involved in his project would also get the opportunity to gain practical experience to apply their knowledge and skills, therefore it is hoped Tambisan Island can continue being a location for research, entrepreneurship and marine conservation," he said.