

# Reinstate the School of Forestry at UMS: Salleh

DE 8-10-2017 8  
UNIVERSITI Malaysia Sabah (UMS) once had a stand-alone school of Forestry called The School of International Tropical Forestry established in collaboration between German and Malaysian forestry experts.

But for some reason, the School of International Tropical Forestry was combined with the School of Science and Technology to form the Faculty of Science and Natural Resources in a state which claims more than 50% forest cover!

So the UMS today does not have a distinctive School of Forestry.

Should UMS get back a School of Forestry?

## Sunrise, not sunset industry

"Yes, they should reinstate the school of forestry because as I said forestry is a sun rise industry, definitely not a sunset industry, it is going up, not going down," Salleh said.

The reasons?

"The role of forestry in climate change and sequestration is now getting serious attention."

For example, Louis Verchot, former Director of Forest & Environment Programme at the Center of International Forestry Research, said the role of forests in addressing

climate change was only beginning to be understood because for decades, it had been treated in isolation as forest for forest sakes.

## Profound new relevance of forestry

But now it is linked closely to climate change and other agendas and the world is seeing much more attention given to forests, since the 2000s.

Biodiversity for instance, forests are still home to the 90pc of land-based animals, plants, insects and birds.

When Salleh asked whether anybody knew what 'Eco' meant, nobody answered.

"It simply means home," he said, surprised by the zero response to his question.

In short, take the forest out, it takes out 90 percent of the world's land based biodiversity.

"Forests play a key role in the sequestration of carbon," Salleh added.

One of the largest carbon sinks in the world, forests sequester about 2.4 billion tons of atmospheric carbon dioxide each year and storing billions of tons more.

"Cleared, over-used and degraded forest contributes to one-sixth of global carbon emission besides increasing sunlight hitting the ground and raising surface temperature," Salleh said.

## Halting deforestation key to tame rising heat

Halting deforestation is now seen as vital to keeping the average global temperature rise to below 2 degree Celsius.

In fact, experts believed reducing deforestation by 50pc by 2020 offers the best chance to meet the goal of the Paris Accord.

Around 6 million hectares of forests are lost or changed each year contributing to the 1/6 CO2 emission cited by Salleh earlier.

"Not only that, wood will always have a demand besides much non-tangible value. It's a whole industry that include managing parks, wildlife, forest research, eco-tourism," Salleh noted.

"These all point to need for professionalism and by an Act of parliament, forestry is a recognised profession, all activities in them must then be managed by professional foresters, not by loggers who only know how to fell trees and make money," Salleh said.

## Prediction: Rising importance of forestry

He predicted increasing focus on natural forest management and rise of forest plantations which are just as complex and any tree plantation.

"Because we do need professional foresters, a Faculty of Forestry is still relevant and needed. But we have to attract good students. Now, it is the last choice. We need good educational institutions and teachers. Money is not everything," Salleh told the gathering UMS top brass and students.

So far from abandoning ship, it's time to put passion for forestry back in Sabah, Salleh said.

"We need commitment, dedication, passion and respect for the environment and nature," he said, in tandem with a growing mood for scaled up total protected forests in Sabah.

## Sabah a shining model

"Sabah is a shining example in terms of permanent forest protection, government commitment, State leadership, international collaboration, Danum Valley, Imbak Valley and Maliau Basin," Salleh noted.

"So forestry is not a sunset industry and there are opportunities for forestry students.

"We must not look at forestry as just trees, forestry is a way of life, not a sunset industry, it is going up, not going down."