

Salleh calls for broader understanding of M'sia's cultures

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KOTA KINABALU: The cultural understanding between various ethnicities in the country allow Malaysians to be more accepting of other cultures, said State Speaker Datuk Salleh Said Keruak.

He said improvement on this understanding is achieved through academia's cultural researches.

Towards this end Salleh called for a broader understanding of Malaysia's diverse cultures to promote continued solidarity and peace within the country.

He was speaking at the Tun Said Keruak Scholarship presentation ceremony at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), here, Friday.

Two UMS Masters students received the scholarship, namely Shaiful Huzairi Mohd Kahil, 26, and Amirulnizam Jamaludin, 25.

The Tun Said Scholarship is presented to sociology or anthropology students whose research is related to the Bajau community and culture.

Shaiful's Masters topic, the History of the Bajau Community's Involvement in Sabah's Administration, is focused on the relationship between Bajau community leaders and the people.

The research also touches on the issues and challenges



Salleh (second left) presenting a mock check to Amirulnizam witnessed by UMS Vice Chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Harun Abdullah (left) and UMS Registrar Lt. Col. Datuk Abdullah Mohd Said.

faced by these leaders in the Sabah administration.

"I've always been interested in Malaysian history so I thought of a way to combine the Bajau and Malaysian history.

"This is one of the topics I've always been interested to pursue, especially because it involves the Sabah administration," said Shaiful, who is of Bajau heritage from Semporna.

Shaiful's research received RM42,526. Speaking on the grant, he said: "Thank God, this is a blessing. I was in a dilemma before applying but I took it anyway and am very grateful for it."

Amirulnizam, who hails from Sabak Bernam, Selangor received RM32,101. His research focuses on the Bajau culture and history in

Kota Belud.

For Amirulnizam, the Kota Belud Bajau culture was love at first sight.

"I visited the Kota Belud Sunday market when I was still pursuing my degree in 2008. That's when I saw the Bajau warrior on a horse, dressed in full attire.

"I thought it was very unique and you don't see this in the peninsula. I was compelled to go deeper into the culture," he said.

Amirulnizam said he has tried on the full attire, complete with a little horse riding, for research.

But he admits that the research can be challenging sometimes because of his West Malaysian heritage.

"Communication can be difficult and sometimes some of the older women are

reluctant to share information because of where I'm from.

"But once I take a Bajau friend with me on my research, it's much easier to communicate and people are more willing to open up to me," said Amirulnizam.

Salleh hoped the Tun Said Keruak Scholarship will help produce a significant impact in the development of ethnicities in Sabah as a whole and become a source of reference for researches throughout the world.

"The ability of a community to identify the restraints in its relationship with various ethnicities and to use this weakness as strength will (create a community) that is admired by the people of the world," said Salleh.