



IT'S A DEAL... Dr Mohd Yaakub Haji Johari, executive director of IDS (right) exchanging the signed MoU with Abu Hassan from UMS while Dompok and Dr Klaus Paehler, representative of Konrad Adenauer Foundation look on.

State wants forestry sector restructured

KOTA KINABALU: The State government feels that the forestry sector should be restructured in view of the slowdown in the timber industry caused by the economic crisis.

"Tourism and Environment Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok said emphasis should now be given on the pharmaceutical value and touristic attractions of the State's forests, which had a large collection of biodiversity, including non-timber products.

"Tourism related activities based on nature experience could further diversify tourism products in Sabah, and this therefore offers big potential for further development."

"As these non-timber aspects of the State's forests are presently underdeveloped, the government will consider serious measures to promote their development along these lines, including the setting up of a centre for Biodiversity Research," he said.

Dompok was speaking at the opening of a two-day seminar and workshop on *Sustainable Use of the Forest Resources: The Prospects of Non-Timber Forest Products in Sabah* here yesterday.

It is jointly organised by Institute for Development Studies, Sabah (IDS) and Universiti Malaysia Sabah and sponsored by Konrad Adenauer Foundation, of Germany.

The seminar is to gather more information on the availability and abundance of non-timber forest resources in the State and to gauge interest and create awareness among the public and private sectors on the potential of developing such resources.

Dompok expressed confidence that development of the non-timber forest resources could lead to the emergence of new resource-based industries, producing high value-added products.

"In view of the recent

regional economic downturn, there is a need to explore other sources of revenue for Sabah," he said.

Later, Dompok witnessed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between IDS and Universiti Malaysia Sabah. The MoU was for both parties to conduct joint research, especially in the non-timber forest resources in the State.

UMS vice chancellor Professor Dato' Dr Abu Hassan Othman said the university has laboratory equipment which can facilitate advanced research works.

"More equipment and tools are being purchased, and with the completion of the permanent campus buildings beginning next year, UMS will have the most up-to-date infrastructure, laboratory equipment and scientific tools which are essential to deal with modern challenges and human development in the next millennium," he said.