

# Double tourism blow, UMS meet told

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**KOTA KINABALU:** The Sulu invasion and the Pom Pom tragedy have drastically affected the tourism industry, said Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Vice Chancellor, Datuk Mohd Harun Abdullah.

"These tragedies have greatly affected the tourism industry, which is the second most important sector in the State," he said at the opening of a seminar entitled "Border Discourse" (Wacana Perbatasan) at the YTL Hall in UMS, Wednesday.

"After the Sulu invasion ended in the Tanduio bloodshed, statistics showed a drastic drop in tourists to the State. About 20,000 to 40,000 difference, in the number of tourists, could be seen before and after the invasion.

"In the months of April and May, the number of tourists did not reach 79,000 while in the months of January, February and March, all exceeded 90,000. In the months after the invasion, June and July, the number of tourists reached up to 112,000

people," he said in his speech delivered by UMS Associate Professor, Asmady Idris.

He added, due to risky conditions, embassies might issue travel advisories.

"These travel advisories are given to the people in their own nation who are advised against visiting Sabah. If this happens, our tourism industry will have great difficulty just because of acts by terrorists from outside the State," he said.

Apart from this, he said, due to

Sabah's location, the State also has to deal with illegal immigrants pouring in.

"Having Indonesia and Philippines close to the borders, an uncountable number of illegals have poured into the State.

"The State would welcome them if they contributed to the work force and entered by legal means, but they enter illegally. This is a big risk to the State, and nation's security," he said.

The seminar is the result of net-

working among the researchers of UMS and other universities with the objective of sharing research papers and information, to build better networking among researchers and to propose the founding of a "Malaysia Borders Association".

The seminar will feature lecturers, from various universities, to deliver their case studies involving 'bordered' regions in the nation.

These include Sabah-Indonesia-Philippines-Brunei, Johor-Singapore and Kedah-South Thailand.