

# Proposal for UMS study on Pala'u community

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**KOTA KINABALU:** The Sabah Kadazandusun Murut Welfare and Education Association (Pekadin) has proposed that Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) carry out an indepth study on the population of the Pala'u (Sea Bajau) community in Sabah's east coast, particularly in the waters of Semporna.

Its vice-president, Luis Lidong, said although some research had been conducted on the Pala'u community living on certain islands like Pulau Gusungan in the Semporna waters, a comprehensive study needed to be done on this ethnic group in Sabah's eastern coastal waters as their number was increasing.

He said based on information from the local residents, the Pala'u community originally lived on several islands in the Semporna waters including the Bangau-

Bangau water village, but they were now found scattered in Semporna and its waters.

"The Pala'u community does not have any documents tracing their origins, hence a detailed study on the community would be good as their number is also increasing.

"Many Sabahans would like to know the number of Pala'u who have all along been living in Semporna or carrying on with their daily lives in boats in the waters of Semporna, as they are concerned about possible infiltration by Pala'u from a neighbouring country into the local community," he added in a statement issued here yesterday.

Luis said such indepth research work would not only serve as reference material for scholars and researchers from higher learning institutions, but also as a guideline

for the authorities or government to carry out follow-up action, especially on security.

He said Pekadin hoped that the Immigration Department and National Registration Department would consider issuing original Pala'u residents with a special identification document each, to prevent the entry of illegal Pala'u migrants from islands such as Pulau Sitangkai in the neighbouring country.

Luis said the matter should not be taken lightly as there were recent incidents in the state's east coast which had threatened the country's security and sovereignty.

"We don't want undocumented Pala'u people who always live on boats, or criminals, to take advantage of the situation as an easy passage to enter and exit our country's waters," he added.