

# Suggestion for special ID to islanders

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KOTA KINABALU: Special identification documents issued to islanders in Sabah is one possible way to enhance security measures in the state's waters, suggested Assistant Minister of Tourism, Culture, and Environment, Datuk Pang Yuk Ming.

He said the document issued as a card can assist security forces in differentiating local residents from foreigners.

"The special card can identify them as either residents on an island or otherwise," he said when declaring open the Small Islands Research Centre (SIRC) by Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) here yesterday.

He said SIRC can conduct comprehensive research on small islands particularly in the east coast and along in-

ternational borders.

"I suggest that UMS identify the indigenous residents of the islands and find out if illegal migrations is happening in that area so we will not have an enemy living among us in the future.

"I believe that some islanders who have lived there for generations do not have identity cards because they regard identification as not important but these render them as stateless people," he added.

According to Pang SIRC can play its role by collecting data and documenting so the government can take necessary the action.

The data, he said, can be used by the government as reference when developing the area to raise the living standards of the people there.

"Perhaps I can also suggest that research can be focused on the terrains of

the small islands so the authority can monitor them closely.

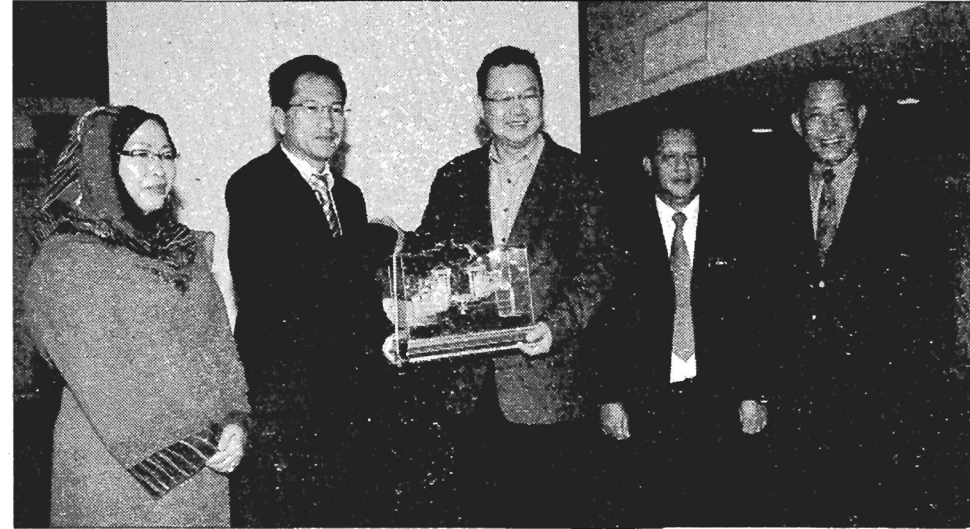
"We should master the terrain on the islands including potential hiding areas for intruders," he added.

Meanwhile, UMS Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah said all the small islands are important to the country as they determine the expansion of the nation's waters.

He said the SIRC is one of the university's contributions in developing and improving research on islands in Borneo.

"The studies that will be carried out will involve two island categories, namely small island and micro island, and will be divided into two clusters, namely Science Cluster and Non-Science Cluster.

Science Cluster will focus on the fields of geology, environmental science, biotech-



Pang (centre) receiving a memento from Dr Harun (second left).

nology, biology conservation, health, marine science, while non-science cluster will concentrate on history, physical geography, economy, archeology, art and culture, security, stateless people and il-

legal immigration.

The research will identify the potentials of every island for the purpose of tourism economic development.

Research findings will be compiled and shared with rel-

evant government agencies such as the Eastern Sabah Security Command, the Marine Department, Survey and Mapping Department, Sabah Parks and Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency.