

# UMS sets up centre to study Sabah's islands

By Shalina Roseni

**KOTA KINABALU:** The lack or absence of written studies on the small islands between the sea borders of Sabah and neighbouring countries, Philippines and Indonesia, has led to the setting up of the Small Islands Research Centre (SIRC).

SIRC, the first of its kind in Malaysia, was formed by Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) to establish new facts and findings as well as to improve the results of existing studies.

UMS vice chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah, when launching the research centre here yesterday, said the centre would contribute to strategically identify economic and tourism potentials of the 394 islands that can be found from here to the Philippines and Indonesia border.

He said accumulated data and research findings would also be shared with relevant government agencies like the Eastern Sabah Security Command, Marine Department, Survey and Mapping Department, Sabah Parks and Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency.

Data will be gathered from different fields of studies, including geology, environmental science, bio-technology, biological conservation, health, marine



UMS deputy vice chancellor of student affairs and alumni Professor Dr Ismail Ali (right) handing over the fund for SIRC to UMS vice chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah, witnessed by Pang (centre) yesterday.

science, physical geography, economy, archaeology, arts and culture, law, tourism, security, linguistic, migration, population, illegal immigrants and so on.

"The establishment of the centre would make various management and research facilities available to researchers. In fact, research findings gathered will be developed as reference for lecturers and researchers, post-graduates and the community," said Harun.

He informed further that strategic planning has been developed to ensure the setting up of SIRC would meet

its objectives, which include providing a one-stop research management centre, developing collaboration with local and international institutions to generate research grants, managing intellectual property and research publications as well as commercializing research findings.

"Having sufficient data on hand could help in addressing potential territorial conflicts with other countries such as in the case of Batu Puteh," said Harun, who added that the centre will play a vital role in terms of enhancing the state's maritime security.