

UMS research on islands to help improve security

Larissa Lumandan

KOTA KINABALU: A newly set up research centre at Universiti Malaysia is expected to play a role in collecting data, documentation and written or visual information on island populations, in particular the migrants, in the State.

"This will enable the government to come up with solutions to problems besides offering them special identification cards," said Tourism, Culture and Environment Assistant Minister Datuk Pang Yuk Ming.

He added that it would be the main key for security forces when searching for suspects behind intrusion and kidnapping incidents.

It is envisaged that the Small Islands Research Centre (SIRC) will be capable of assisting in the State's development especially in terms of security.

"The university through their research in determining the islands' population census will definitely help to strengthen security across Malaysian waters," said Pang.

"My suggestion would be that the university can determine the natives and illegal migrants among the people in the islands," he said.

Pang believed there are communities who had been living in the islands for years and not exposed to any developments therefore, any valid identification documents would not be too important for them.

"All they did was to focus on making ends meet," he said, adding that most of them do not have any nationality.

According to him, the data collected by the centre will also be used as references to the government in developing the islands and improve the people's standard of living.

"I would like to thank the university for

their contribution to the development of our nation and State.

"I believe the safety in the East Coast of Sabah will improve with the support of the university as well as Federal government. We're not there yet but I believe we're on our way to a better and safer environment," he said.

UMS Vice Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah said they will collaborate with other parties such as Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom) and the Immigration Department throughout their researches.

"We cannot work on our own as it involves the security of our researchers and besides, we also contribute inputs to the government in terms of security," he said.

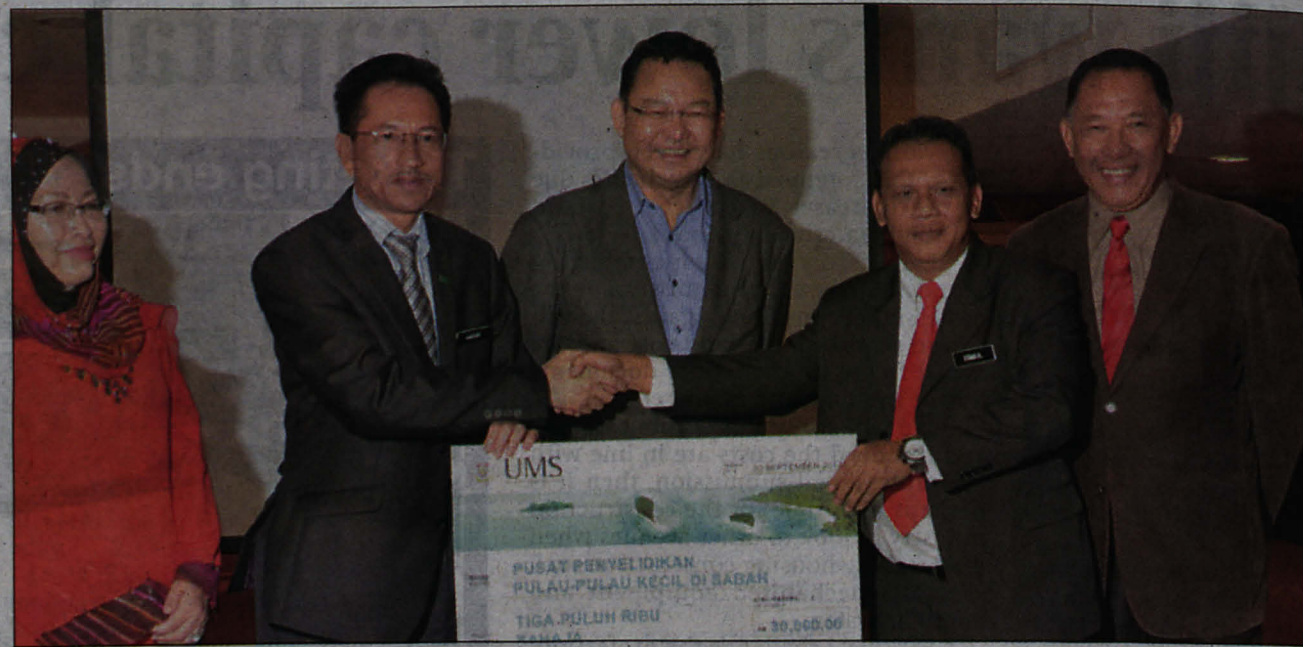
The research may also help the government in turning the islands in Sabah into potential tourism spots, he said.

Sabah, according to him has the most islands with a total of 394 and the government had managed to identify most of them, however, not much research had been done on the islands.

"But the centre, I believe would serve as a platform for all researchers to analyse their information and ideas besides being in constant contact with both the State and Federal government regarding developments," he said.

He later explained that research will be divided into two categories namely Small Islands and Smallest Islands focusing on Scientific Cluster and Non- Scientific Cluster.

"The Scientific Cluster will focus on Geology, Environmental Science, Biotechnology, Biology Conservation, Health, Marine Science and others whereas the Non-Scientific Cluster will be focussing on history, physical geography, economy, archaeology, safety, migration, illegal immigrants and others," he said.



Pang (centre) and Harun (second left) during the handing over of 'allocation for the centre.