



Yusof (front, centre) flanked by UMS Vice Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr D Kamarudin D Mudin (left) and Sabah Foundation Group director Jamalul Kiram Datuk Mohd Zakaria after flagging off the UMS Borneo Geographic Expedition 2018: Kangkawat Research Station, Imbak Canyon Conservation Area (ICCA).

## UMS should lead in conserving environment – minister

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**KOTA KINABALU:** Environmental issues require the attention of everyone regardless of background, aside from studies and research.

It is getting worse day by day, said Education and Innovation Minister Datuk Dr Yusof Jacob, hence the need for concerted actions to protect and conserve what is left.

“We all have a responsibility to protect the environment. We all share the same land and breathe the same air. We have no place other than this earth.

“Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) as one of the public universities in Sabah with expertise in the fields of biological diversity, natural resources, humanities, arts and culture should lead the way towards increasing protection of ecological balance,” he said.

Yusof said this in his welcome address shortly before flagging off the UMS Borneo Geographic Expedition 2018: Kangkawat Research Station, Imbak Canyon Conservation Area

(ICCA), yesterday.

He hoped to see UMS work closely with more government bodies and agencies to reach that goal, in addition to playing a more proactive role in environmental protection efforts.

The government is committed to protection and conservation activities, he added, saying what more those related to education of the environment as a heritage treasure for future generations.

Not only that, said Yusof who emphasised the importance of preserving local communities that live off the land, as well as their culture and customs.

“Management of a natural area depends highly on biological knowledge of its ecosystem. Without that knowledge, there is a possibility that an area rich in endangered wildlife or endemic species risks being turned into a plantation field, hence resulting in extinction.

“There is also the socioeconomic issue of interior communities, where the conflict

between them and wildlife requires a non-destructive solution for both parties.

“The presence of foreign communities also impacts and puts pressure on the natural resources and life values of original settlers.

“Furthermore, interior communities practise rich cultural arts and values that should be documented for reference for future generations, hence the need for research from a social science approach,” he said.

Earlier, UMS Institute of Tropical Biology and Conservation acting director Associate Professor Dr Monica Suleiman said a total of 179 participants from 14 universities nationwide, as well as government and private agencies, participated in the 12-day expedition.

The scope of study included entomology, plants, small mammals, geology, birds, fish, water quality, nature tourism and social science.