

UMS to become durian information centre

By **Safrah Mat Salleh**

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) will become a stop center for the community to know more about durians and their diversity.

UMS Strategic Management Centre and Corporate Communication deputy director Associate Professor Dr Abd Hamid Ahmad said UMS was signing a letter with Yun Fook Resources to collaborate in collecting durian varieties of the best quality and other durian species found in Borneo.

The cooperation is one of the efforts to conserve genetic durian resources and awareness on durian conservation could be nurtured by identifying various forms of the fruit and experiencing the delights of

durian varieties, including wild durian fruits, he said.

"Borneo Island is very special because it has the highest number of durian species of more than 18 species when compared to seven and 11 species in Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia respectively.

"Durian 'bangking', which grows wild in large forests has red skin, yellowish flesh and black seeds, can only be found in Borneo. Its flesh is sweet, but (the fruit) is hard to find," he said.

The signing of the letter was made between UMS and agriculture industry players at UMS chancellery building here yesterday.

Also present were Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Salahuddin Ayub and Assistant Agriculture and Food

Industry Minister Dr Daud Yusof.

According to UMS Tropical Biology and Conservation Institutes director Associate Professor Dr Monica Suleiman, the institute would play an important role in developing knowledge and expertise on durians and this could be reinforced through the establishment of a durian research garden at UMS, as inspired by the UMS vice chancellor Professor Datuk Dr D Kamarudin D Mudin.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UMS and the Sabah Veterinary Services Department (DVS) was also signed.

Kamarudin said with the MoU, various activities such as sharing of livestock, usage of laboratory facilities and sharing of expertise in teaching and learning as well as research and development would be carried out.

"The Faculty of Sustainable Agriculture also offers external campus programs to DVS staff with the first enrollment of 14 people already in the second year of their study," he said.

He also congratulated and thanked Enrich Marine Sdn Bhd for giving out its first phase of research fund of RM100,000 to UMS Borneo Marine Research Institute, which was presented through a mock cheque, yesterday.

Kamarudin said the signed research contract between the aquaculture industry player and UMS was for a research on lobsters, which would develop a sustainable lobster technology by adopting the facilities and expertise available at the institute.