

One-stop eco-campus info centre launched

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KOTA KINABALU: The opening of the one-stop eco-campus information Centre (EVIC) will provide everything visitors need to know on the numerous attractions and tourist packages at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

Its Vice Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr D. Kamarudin D. Mudin at yesterday's launching, underlined the information Centre will also help the university enhance visitors' awareness and promote greater appreciation on preserving nature and the environment.

"Encouraging educational tourism and environmental awareness among visitors is one of the aims of the university apart from promoting UMS as one of the 'must go places' in Kota Kinabalu," he said.

The text of his speech was read by UMSKAL Director, Prof Dr Murnizam Hj Halik at the officiating ceremony of the UMS Eco-campus Visitor Information Centre which was also witnessed by General Manager of Sabah Tourism Board, Suzaini Datuk Sabdin Ghani and Datuk Ag. Buh-taman Ag. Mahmud, Group Chairman of UMS Investment Holdings Sdn Bhd,

Furthermore, Kamarudin noted UMS is ready to work with tour operators through UINVEST to bring more tourists to the university which is seeing increasing numbers of tourists who frequent various attractions including, UMS mosque, Aquarium and Marine Museum and the scenic ODEC beach.



EASY REACH ... Murnizam cutting the ribbon with Buhtaman (2nd right) and Suzaini (far left) at the soft launching of the UMS Eco-Campus Visitor Information Centre (EVIC) at the background.

He expressed hope the centre which will be managed by the university's business and commercial arm, UMS Investment Holdings Sdn Bhd, would enhance visitors' knowledge and bring a positive impact on their awareness of environmental issues, particularly in Sabah.

In the mission to maintain, nurture and conserve the natural assets of UMS, Kamarudin noted the university established the Ecocampus Management Centre in 2013 as a body to implement, enforce, monitor and assess the key elements of the EcoCampus Transformation Plan.

"UMS is evolving from 'just' a university with a beautiful landscape towards a brand that is unique for Sabah which attracts tourists worldwide, who come to appreciate the natural beauty of our cam-

pus, and we are heading to the goal of becoming the must-visit place for tourists who visit Sabah," he said.

Kamarudin also extended his appreciation and gratitude for the support given by the State Government through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment, and the Sabah Tourism Board (STB) who have been instrumental in assisting the establishing of the EVIC centre.

Meanwhile, Suzaini revealed that tourist arrivals to Sabah is seeing an increase of 17 per cent on a year-to-year comparison from January to June 2018 in contrast to the same period in the previous year, with Chinese and South Koreans making the bulk of international tourist arrivals.

"Sabah recorded 680,000 international tourists within the same period in 2018, an

increase of 16.6 % compared to the period in 2017, and we hope to achieve a better number than last year," she said, highlighting the figures indicate strong potential on eco-tourism attractions.

With strong tourism prospects for Sabah, Suzaini underlined it was crucial to diversify tourism products, create more interesting activities and attractions and improve facilities to better serve the ever increasing numbers of international tourists.

"We are keen to assist UMS and EVIC on the wonderful attractions in campus, tourists can enjoy the sun, the beach and the tropical forest all within reach in this very campus within close proximity of Kota Kinabalu, it's a rarity for a public university to be bestowed with such natural assets," she said.