



The 'zombie mushroom'.

## RM5 mln grant for devt of mushroom, ginger products

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**KOTA KINABALU:** Yayasan Sabah has presented a grant worth RM5 million to Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) for the development of mushroom and ginger products.

UMS Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), Prof Madya Ts Dr Ramzah Dambul said the development is a strategic project initiative for the socio-economic sector and could even change the bio-agro landscape in Sabah.

"According to Grand View Research, the size of the global mushroom market is USD46.1 billion (2020), with an annual growth of 9.5 percent up to 2028.

"Malaysia's mushroom imports have reached RM18 million a year based on data from 2012. This is a thriving industry," he said in a Facebook post, following an exploration with the UMS researchers to Taman Bukit Tawau.

According to Ramzah, the problem now is that there are no structured research-driven initiatives to study the development of the mushroom sector.

"This is the gap that UMS is trying to address," he said.

He further disclosed that the UMS research team, led

by Dr Jaya Seelan Sathiya had since identified 1,250 species of Bornean wild mushrooms.

"Forty-five per cent of the mushrooms have pharmaceutical value, of which 18 species have already completed fundamental studies.

"Twenty-five per cent are in the edible category, five species are in the 'domestication' stage to be translated into the agro-industry.

"This includes the 'Sabah shiitake', Sabah's very own species that has a premium potential equivalent to Japanese shiitake," said Dr Ramzah.

He added that some of the mushrooms that were found offered very unique benefits. For instance, 18 species of glowing mushrooms have the potential to be incorporated into a 'glowing garden', which can then be used as a tourist attraction.

"There are also 'zombie mushrooms' whose spores can penetrate small animals such as insects. It grows roots from within the body and then kills the host," said Ramzah.

He further disclosed that some of the mushrooms could also be turned into organic dyes, which could be used on paper and textiles.