

# High potential of herbal production at forest reserve

BP 12.01.2021 P.3

By Jenne Lajum

**PENAMPANG:** The Sugud Firewood and Grazing Reserve has huge potential in the production of herbs and traditional medicine in Sabah.

According to Sabah Economic Advisory Council (SEAC) Chairman of Forestry, Herbal and Traditional Medicine Committee, Datuk Seri Panglima Clarence B. Malakun, the reserve is a sizeable area of 1,050 acres and has been very well preserved by villagers of nearby villages for years.

He added that there are over 400 species of trees at the reserve.

He also said that the reserve is located merely 20 minutes away from the airport and it would be a tragedy if the area is destroyed.

"We should keep it for the future generation," he said when visiting the reserve recently.

Deputy chairman of the Sabah Native Land Owners' and Developers Association (SANLODA), Datuk Stephen Sondoh explained that the reserve is located within the Timpagoh district of Putatan.

He cited that at one time, a bobohizan used to carry out the rituals at the area and in the past, people would not visit the reserve without a reason.

He added that there have been many people applying for the land to be developed but even after the approval of development plans, they have received strong opposition from the local communities.

Stephen concurred with Clarence on the need to protect the area for the future generation, stating that the Sugud Firewood and Grazing reserve is the largest within the nearby vicinity.

"The grazing reserve in Kinarut is only 100 acres while the one is



David (third from left, seated), Clarence (fourth from left, seated), Ben (seated, right), Stephen (standing, second from left) and the participants of the discussion on the viability of the herbal and traditional medicine at ITCC recently.

Papar is 500 acres.

"This is the biggest grazing area...we should preserve this land for the future generation," he said.

Stephen also commended the forefathers who had the foresight to protect the area in the past.

The director of the Kadazandusun Cultural Centre (KDCA) Cultural and Heritage Unit and KDCA Central Committee Member, Dr Benedict Topin when introducing the area said that in the past the highlanders and lowlanders would kill one another for heads.

It is alleged that human heads were necessary if a young man wanted to marry a maiden and without any collection of human heads, the young man would not be deemed an attractive catch.

Nevertheless, Benedict said that the area where the event was held was a very historic site since it was there that the highlanders and lowlanders came into an agreement to stop killing each other for heads (headhunting).

He said that the five stones that

were used to commemorate the agreement were located there.

Meanwhile, Jefflus Sinajin who spoke of the various species of plants at the reserve said that the reserve comprises of mixed uphill dipterocarp forest and the area is 250 meters above sea level.

"The area has been well managed by the community...most of the areas are dominated by commercial forest although some parts of the place have been disturbed by unknown people," he said.

"There are potential in this area, as far as herbs is concerned. However, no one is doing research here and we invite experts from Universiti Malaysia Sabah to come over and carry out their research. I am fairly sure there are natural medicinal plants here...it is a matter who is going to look for them."

He added that those who are versed in traditional medicine will be able to pinpoint which plants are valuable medicines.

He also said that in one hectare of area, there are 100 herbal

plants.

"That is the beauty of the tropical forest...it is a natural medical centre.

"There is potential for that. But it depends how we tap and commercialise them. We have already commercialised the Gabaru in Tawau," he said.

Jefflus also said that some of the trees at the reserve were over 100 years old.

Also present at the event which also included a discussion at the ITCC in Penampang were SEAC chairman, Tan Sri David Chu and other SEAC members.

One of the participants of the discussion, Datuk John Wong, said that Sabah needs to focus on high value crops and that herbs will be able to give the best returns.

He also said that the palm oil sector gave nothing in return for Sabah, citing that the industry generated RM22 billion in revenues but Sabah's share was less than RM1 billion.

"It is time to get Sabahans first," he said.