

# UMS to play role in forest restoration

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*Taufiq (third right) and Roslin (third left) signing the agreement, witnessed Masidi (fourth right) and Redza (fourth left) look on.*

**TUARAN:** The memorandum of agreement between Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and Sime Darby Plantation Berhad on forest restoration in Sapong Estate Tenom that was signed yesterday is proof of commitment to translate locally bred knowledge into actions on the ground.

UMS vice-chancellor Prof Datuk ChM. Dr Taufiq Yap Yun Hin said it will also address environmental concerns in Sabah.

“Through this agreement, UMS is looking forward to have our academicians and students conducting forestry and environmental related research at Sapong Estate.

“We look forward to the support that would be given by Sime Darby Plantation. With that support, we will in turn provide appropriate human resources and management know-how so that Sime Darby may achieve its economic and environmental goals.

“I can conclude that in the long run, Sapong Forest Rehabilitation project will serve as a teaching forest for UMS undergraduate and postgraduate students in the areas of forest restoration, silviculture and biodiversity studies.

“I like to simply state that the agreement between Sime Darby Plantation Berhad and UMS would be in the best interest of our society,” he said during a seminar and signing ceremony of the agreement at Shangri-La’s Rasa Ria Resort & Spa, here.

Dr Taufiq, in his speech thanked Sime Darby Plantation Berhad for the opportunity given to the university, to be a part of the effort in restoring forests in oil palm landscape.

UMS, he said, is committed to supporting Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (SDG), while the signing ceremony is part of SDG Goals.

“Being a biodiversity hotspot, how a public agency appreciates and manages its resources is an interest not just to its local community but also the international community. But many decades ago, there was really never an issue about forestry because Sabah’s population was very small and not very capitalistic.

“Today, forestry is an issue as the demand for land-based resources increases proportionately with Sabah’s population growth. The State is challenged by plantation driven deforestation. If unmanaged, Sabah might stand to lose more of its forest cover.

“However, the Sabah Forestry Department (SFD) is committed to conserve 30% of Sabah’s forest under Totally Protected Areas,” said Dr Taufiq.

He added, at this point in time, universities in Malaysia focused on tertiary education and research. Then they added development into their portfolio.

“Today, every university gets involved with commercialisation. As a result, public universities in Malaysia are supposed to be involved in tertiary education, research, development and commercialisation. But the involvement of public universities into development and commercialisation is never to compete with existing industries.

“Instead, it is to complement them. Why should an industry build up a research team? Similarly, why should a university spearhead an industry? Why not cooperate?” he asked.

Dr Taufiq further explained that UMS is the ninth public university in Malaysia, and the first university to carry the State of Sabah’s name.

It is UMS’ mission, he said, to strive for academic excellence and international recognition through its attention to learning and teaching, research and publications, social services and balance in knowledge specialisation.

He further explained, currently, UMS has 10 faculties and is in the process of establishing a new faculty of Tropical Forestry.

This faculty will offer five programmes namely International Tropical Forestry programme, Nature Park and Recreation programme, Forestry Plantation and Agro-forestry programme, Wood Fibre Industry and Technology programme, and Conservation Biology programme.

“With this, UMS is proud to work with a lead corporate body in Malaysia like Sime Darby Plantation Berhad.

“To us in UMS, Sime Darby Plantation Berhad is not just a business entity. It employs locals,

and uses local expertise, Sime Darby Plantation Berhad is a business entity with a national conscience.

“Of course, this collaboration has a history since it started with letters of intent last year. Because of this, a Memorandum of Agreement with Sime Darby Plantation Berhad will benefit Sabah specifically and Malaysia as a whole,” he said.

Also present at the event yesterday were Head of Sime Darby Plantation Berhad Group Sustainability Rashid Redza Anwarudin, chairman of UMS Board of Directors Datuk Seri Panglima Masidi Manjun and CEO of Sime Darby Plantation Upstream Malaysia, Roslin Azmy Hassan.