UMS signs pact to develop bacterial culture collections

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), through its Institute of Biotechnology Research (IPB), signed a collaboration agreement with the Sabah Biodiversity Centre (SaBC) to develop existing and new bacterial culture collections from several locations in the State.

The year-long joint venture involving a research allocation worth RM500,000 from SaBC was signed in a ceremony at UMS, according to a statement.

UMS Vice-Chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Taufiq Yap Yun Hin and SaBC Secretary Gerald Jetony signed the agreement.

Through the project, UMS will assist SaBC in developing existing and new bacterial culture collections from Sipadan Island, Mabul Island, Mataking Island, Danum Valley and the Imbak Canyon Conservation Centre.

The research project will be led by the Director of IPB, Dr Zarina Amin, and Prof Dr Clemente Michael Wong Vui Ling, who is a specialist in molecular microbiology research from the institute.

Zarina said with its expertise and high-technology infrastructure, IPB has the potential to assist the State Government in developing the first bacterial culture collection in the State.

"This is especially true for bacteria that has potential applications in medicine and industry such as enzymes and other biochemical compounds," she said.

"Among the research activities to be carried out are bacterial culture and identification through 16S gene sequencing and genome sequencing of several identified strains."

Zarina said bacterial culture training will also be provided to SaBC staff during the joint venture.

"This is a technology transfer process between UMS and SaBC," she said.

"A database will also be developed to record the number of bacterial species present in the State."

She hoped through this effort, close cooperation in technology transfer and bio-conservation can be maintained between UMS academics and state government agencies to expand biodiversity, bio-industry and biomedicine in Sabah.

Taufiq signing the agreement.