KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has lined up several new high-impact initiatives and special projects to optimize its research and academic learning as well as its teaching and learning related facilities.

UMS vice chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Harun Abdullah, who announced this when addressing the students at the university here yesterday, said the initiatives will not involve any form of financial input or commitment from the university.

"I feel there is a need for us to practise creative and innovative methods and approaches to make every planned project a reality by involving agencies and outside parties, especially from the private sector.

"By doing so, UMS would be able to not only excel in research and academic learning but also provide optimum facilities for aspects related to teaching and learning," said Harun, who also highlighted that the Initiatives will be focused on projects not listed in the 10th Malaysia Plan (10MP).

Among these projects are a bridging program into the UMS Faculty of Sustainable Agriculture, which will be offered to students from Kota Belud's Timbang Menggaris Agriculture Institute and other similar institutes as feeders to the faculty. The six-month program will be enhanced with business elements and would enable students to fulfil the basic requirements for entry into the Bachelor's study programme.

Besides that, the 'Sanjung Ilmu' program will be established as a platform for nurturing future intellectuals among UMS academics aged between 30 and 45.

"UMS aspires to nurture a group of intellectuals capable of shaping and influencing progress and development in the world of education at the international level.

"The crux of this programme is on providing exposure and assistance to young academicians to upgrade their knowledge and expertise and eventually join the ranks of global academic elites," said Harun.

An international advisory panel comprising renowned universities will provide ideas and advice and assist the university in creating pathways towards educational excellence and eventually Nobel Laureate levels of achievements in niche areas that are the foundation and strength of UMS and the island of Borneo, said the vice chancellor.

The fast growing university will also enhance their on-campus nursery facilities by establishing the UMS Child Development Centre.

"I believe the long-term projection made by the Human Resources Division is for the UMS nursery to eventually offer comprehensive care and learning packages for children of UMS staff between the ages of six months to pre-school level.

"It is the vision of the university management that this centre become the best model in Borneo for child care. Another long-term planning is for this nursery to expand into providing primary school education and secondary school learning at a later stage," he elaborated.

Accessibility to the five-star university's on-campus accommodation facilities will also be extended to visitors through the construction of "Desa Harmoni" project in order to generate income through room rentals and various other activities such as meetings, workshops and events.

The project construction and establishment is expected to be on a joint-venture basis with the private sector without incurring any cost or additional budget funds from the university or the Federal Government.

UMS also plans to renovate and turn part of its Kingfisher Residential College block into fully-equipped accommodation for international students at affordable rates. The residential block is expected to be operational for the 2015/2016 student intake, said the vice chancellor.

Harun also launched the UMS Online Bookstore website at the same ceremony. Over 500 UMS publications, mostly academic books based on research findings, will be made available in early March, this year.