

Author: Durie Rainer Fong
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UMS closer to 'varsity in a garden'

Durie Rainer Fong

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) moved a step closer towards realising the institution's vision of a "University in a Garden", with the opening of the UMS Botanical Garden, Thursday.

Launched by Vice-Chancellor Prof. Datuk Seri Kamaruzaman Ampon, the six-hectare park situated at UMS Peak, the highest point in the campus, in UMS Hill, was designed and would be managed by the School of International Tropical Forestry.

It would be home to many plants endemic to Sabah and Borneo, apart from a source for botanical research, a place for people to kick back and observe nature.

"We want to create an environment inside the campus that could inspire students and staff alike, and also make them feel proud...it is also part of our beautification effort.

"Of course (the garden is open to the public)...we will make sure everybody can come and enjoy the park," he said after the launching ceremony.

Kamaruzaman said the garden would be filled with fruit trees like durian, mangosteen and rambutan, and plants such as orchids and forest flowers, and local commercial yet rarely seen trees like Seraya, Urat and Belian, adding UMS was built on a 999-acre site.

"Who has actually seen the Belian tree (a type of timber tree)? I've never seen one, only the end product, which is processed wood.

"UMS' concept was actually a university within a forest but the land was not so fertile then (during the building of the university) and the university planted Acacia trees, which dominate the landscape now," he said.

The tree species has served its purpose and it is time to move on and phase out the trees, he added.

"We want to transform that," Kamaruzaman said, adding the drive to come up with a botanical garden of their own was invigorated during the trips to universities in Europe previously, especially the visit to the Technical University of Dresden in Germany, home to the oldest botanical garden and arboretum in the world.

Towards this end, he has left it to the School and its Dean Assoc. Prof. Dr Mahmud Sudin, who is also the project director, to



A bright start: Kamaruzaman watering a plant which he hopes will grow into a big tree at the UMS Botanical Garden while Mahmud (middle) and others look on.

utilise as little as possible the university funds for the park.

"Of course, it's going to cost money like buying equipment, seeds, saplings and all but we leave it to the School's innovation and creativity."

Although the outcome of the project would only be seen 20 or 30 years later, the Vice-Chancellor pointed out it was the hard work and togetherness that mattered now.

"The main aim is to drag all our people to work as a team (and) if everybody pulled together we will be successful," Kamaruzaman said.