

## Take pride in biodiversity status: Lajim

SABAHANS should be proud to be in a State that is regarded as one of the leading biodiversity centres that still exist in the world.

"Malaysians, particularly those in Sabah, should be proud to be bestowed with the responsibility by the world community to be the guardian of the most precious natural heritage called "germplasma", Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Hj Lajim Hj Ukin said.

Undoubtedly, he said Sabahans have done a great job in protecting its natural heritage.

He said Sabah has effectively protect its natural heritage, particularly in the preservation of the germplasma, by adopting an effi-

cient professional approach in terms of coordination, maintenance and preservation, among others.

These approaches, he said, forced the State Government to set up the Sabah Parks which is being managed and administered by the Board of Trustees.

In addition, he said the State Government also created the Wildlife Department for the same purpose.

"Some of our research activities and studies were also made through "smart partnership" with local and international institutions of higher learning such as Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Unimas and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)," he said, adding the

State Government had allocated large grants for this purpose.

On the other hand, he said Sabahans should realise the great task in maintaining the State's natural heritage.

"We have to really give our great concern to our surrounding and learn how to maintain, monitor and preserve it, such as our marine and fresh water resources," he said.

He said the task to protect the natural heritage was a difficult one, especially with the presence of the large number of illegal immigrants.

"The scenario was aggravated as a result of some irresponsible locals and foreign tourists who couldn't care less about Sabah natural her-

itage.

"These irresponsible parties had conducted some illegal activities which are a threat to our natural eco-community," said the Minister.

Among the illegal activities, he said, include illegal logging in gazetted areas and the destructions of the forests through burning and other negative activities carried out by people in the interiors.

However, Lajim said these will not weaken the Government's effort to protect its natural heritage.

Towards this end, he hopes participants of the symposium, could come up with more effective and efficient ideas on the preservation of the natural heritage.

# UMS sets up biology and marine centres

By LARRY RALON

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Vice Chancellor Prof Datuk Seri Dr Abu Hassan Othman said two centres of excellence were set up recently.

The two centres were the Conservation and Tropical Biology Unit (UBTP) and Borneo Marine Research Unit (UPMB).

He said UBTP had led various research activities aimed at upgrading the community's knowledge on the various biology in Borneo, especially in the State.

"With its reference collection centre, Borneensis, the unit has started building its collection which could be part of the country's precious treasures in future," he said, adding that this will also help in generating more basic research.

He was speaking during the launching of the three-day symposium on Genetic Resources of Borneo — Conservation and Sustainable Use of Genetic Resources organised by UMS in collaboration with the Genetic Society of Malaysia at Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort, Tuesday.

Abu Hassan said UBTP had also recorded great findings in their search for natural medication and drug resources besides being an exhibition and genetic resources for domestic purposes.



Abu Hassan (right) with Lajim during the symposium.

Touching on the marine field, Abu Hassan said UPMB was also involved in various researches which could be used economically in the State.

According to him, part of the research activities was the expansion of "Kerapu" — a local type of fish, known as "Kerapu Tikus" in cage breeding condition.

"The result shows this type of fish could be breed using cage breeding method which is larger in size, as well as increase in its market value," said

Abu Hassan.

He said the unit had also succeeded in convincing that the State's wide seafronts offer opportunities for development of the local seaweed industry.

"Such interesting results show that these research activities could contribute in providing better income for the people as well as elevate their economic status," he said.

Abu Hassan said UMS has nine learning institutions with eight schools and a language and knowledge centre.