



Masidi (centre) witnessing the exchange of documents between Dr Mohd Harun (second left) and a Philippines representative of an institute of higher learning.

UMS can become reference centre for BIMP-EAGA: VC

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Barnard Yaang

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) on Monday pledged its commitment to attain sustainability and enhance competitiveness and innovation so as to benefit the BIMP-EAGA region.

Its newly appointed Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah, said the role of universities in the development of the Bimp-Eaga is not a luxury.

"It is an essential component as capacity building and knowledge enhancement is a necessity.

"The mechanisms in achieving sustainable development must be worked out efficiently in all member countries," he said at the opening of the Bimp-Eaga 2012 Conference by Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister, Datuk Masidi Manjun.

Thus, he said UMS Strategic Plan, the networking amongst higher education institutions, research institutions, the private sector and related organisations must be strengthened.

As such, the Letter of Intent signing between UMS and Palawan State University and MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology, are examples of such efforts that support UMS Strategic Plan to set a "Blazing Trail for Higher Education in Sabah", he said.

The university, he said, is prepared to play an important role in assisting member countries in the Bimp-Eaga region in achieving its objectives in numerous ways.

He said this could be accomplished via an exchange of lecturers and students, conducting joint research and development, joint publications and conferences and seminars especially in common pool areas such as forest and marine resources.

"Other areas where we urgently need to combine our expertise in are tropical biology and conservation, marine science, fisheries, food security, marine resource management, biotechnology, sustainable tourism development and poverty eradication," he said.

To this, he said the UMS has the potential to become an excellent centre of reference for major tropics and issues relating to the

Bimp-Eaga in the areas of sustainable tourism, biodiversity, aquaculture and poverty eradication that is in line with the university's core research niches.

The potential of the Bimp-Eaga, Dr Mohd Harun said, as an economic trade and investment zone is well recognised and is no longer an issue for debate considering its "domestic" population of more than 60 million.

The availability of abundant natural resources, he said, gives it a huge potential for tourism development, marine and agri-based industries, as well as varied levels of economic development.

"Needless to say, there are numerous issues which need to be addressed in order to achieve its full potential.

"This includes climate change, safety and security, poverty eradication, terrestrial and marine issues and infrastructure development," he said.

He said that in order to address these challenges, the concepts of innovation and sustainability must provide long-term solutions for the Bimp-Eaga region.

And the ability to innovate is an essential component in order to increase not only the competitiveness of the economies, but also improving quality of life, he said.

On sustainable development, Dr Mohd Harun said, it means meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations.

He said sustainable activities should involve economic, social and environmental issues.

"In the context of the Bimp-Eaga, resulting priorities include combating climate change, ensuring sustainable transport, addressing demographic and social inclusion issues and managing natural resources more responsibly," he said.

Innovation and sustainability, he said, are inseparable.

Thus, UMS focus, he said, is to adopt the concept of sustainable innovation that combines these two underlying concepts.

Dr Mohd Harun said this would mean developing new and innovative products, services and processes that incorporate the concept of sustainability and progress.