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**JOINT STATEMENT FROM YAYASAN SABAH GROUP, STATE FORESTRY DEPARTMENT &
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH**

ON

**BIO-PROSPECTS FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF WILD FUNGI, WILD GINGER AND
MEDICINAL AND AROMATIC PLANTS (TUB) IN THE DANUM VALLEY, MALIAU BASIN,
IMBAK CANYON CONSERVATION AREAS AND FOREST REHABILITATION AREAS IN SABAH**

KOTA KINABALU (Monday) - Yayasan Sabah Group, Sabah Forestry Department and Universiti Malaysia Sabah are proud to announce that the three organisations will be conducting joint research titled "Bio-Prospects for Research and Development of Wild Fungi, Wild Ginger and Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (TUB) in the Danum Valley, Maliau Basin, Imbak Canyon Conservation Areas and Forest Rehabilitation Areas in Sabah."

The research is made possible through funding by the Federal Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (KetSA) and the Sabah Forestry Department as the implementer agencies that provided funds under the 12-Malaysia Plan (RMK-12) for five years starting 2021 to 2025, totaling RM5million.

Under the five years period, two main project components will be researched, namely three indigenous species of wild fungi and one indigenous species of wild ginger that is *Tuhau Etlingera coccinea*, Zingiberaceae family.

Among others, the project's objectives are to identify wild fungi and wild ginger (Tuhau) treasures from the conservation areas of Danum Valley, Maliau Basin, Imbak Canyon and the forest rehabilitation areas through comprehensive field census activities besides providing training to staff and students. The project also aims to develop wild fungi and wild ginger (Tuhau) research hub based at INFAPRO (Innoprise-Face Foundation Rainforest Rehabilitation Project), Lahad Datu.

INFAPRO was initiated in July 1992 between Yayasan Sabah Group and the FACE (Forests Absorbing Carbon Dioxide Emissions) Foundation of The Netherlands (now known as Face the Future). The project sought to plant trees to sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through a Memorandum of Understanding. Located in the Ulu Segama Forest Reserve, buffering the world-renowned Danum Valley Conservation Area in Lahad Datu, Sabah, the project has successfully rehabilitated more than 11,824.5 hectares of degraded forest since its inception.

Yayasan Sabah Group, Sabah Forestry Department and Universiti Malaysia Sabah hope this project will enhance our conservation and forest rehabilitation areas become a hub for such research studies and collaboration besides identifying Novel species and properties.

The initiative hopes to undertake market survey reports on wild fungi, to research a fungi product (at least one prototype), engaging local communities to be entrepreneurs, establishing a spawning unit and lab culture in INFAPRO besides establishing a Demonstration Plot/Pilot Study, hedge orchard and nursery for the wild ginger (Tuhau) studies.

Through this collaboration, various workshops will be organised to demonstrate the projects' applicability and disseminate the results of the research studies.

The first component of the project, i.e., Wild Fungi Project, is researching three species of wild indigenous mushrooms of Sabah. The first research project is entitled "Bornean Tiger's Milk Mushroom (*Lignosus* spp., Polyporaceae family).

The second research is "Molecular phylogeny and cultivation of edible Lentinoid and Pleurotoid mushrooms of Borneo," while the third research is "Unravelling potential biocontrol agents from entomopathogenic fungi (Ef) found in Borneo, Malaysia."

Through the project's second component, the project will conduct ecological exploration of the Sabah's wild ginger *Etlingera coccinea* (Tuhau). UMS will research its wild population density, survival and growth in the nursery and environmental factors that influence its survival and growth in the harsh field conditions. The DNA and its biochemistry studies will be undertaken by the Forest Research Centre (FRC Sepilok) of the Sabah Forestry

Department. The overall concept of this study is to explore the *E. coccinea* ecology and habitat towards germplasm conservation and the techniques to domesticate *E. coccinea* as a cash crop.

The whole project will involve researchers from the three organisations, namely Dr Jayaseelan A/L Sathiyaseelan of UMS (Project Head for Wild Fungi research), Dr Elia Godoong of UMS (Project Head for Wild Ginger research), Dr Yap Sau Wai and Dr Hamzah Tangki, both of Yayasan Sabah Group besides Dr Noreen Majalap and Rolando Robert of the Sabah Forestry Department.

The project will be implemented in five phases yearly basis, with Phase 1 will kick-off from 16 August 2021 to 15 August 2022 for the Fungi and Tuhau projects worth RM1 million.



Macrofungi of Borneo

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