

Unimas to hold third Borneo Inter-university Confab

Thurs 7 Jun 07 11

KUCHING: The Nusantara Studies Programme of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak's (Unimas) Institute of East Asian Studies will hold the 3rd Borneo Inter-university Conference on Social Transformation of Borneo: Reflecting Upon Respective Development Policies and Plans from June 15 to 17.

The conference will be held at Universitas Lambung Mangkurat's campus in Kota Banjarmasin. The Nusantara Studies Programme is organising the event with the cooperation of Unimas' Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat and Universitas Tanjungpura in Pontianak.

Unimas' Institute of East Asian Studies' Nusantara Chair, Professor Abdul Halim Ali, said academics from Sarawak, Sabah, Peninsular Malaysia, Brunei and the four provinces of Kalimantan would present 53 papers during the three-day conference.

The Governor of South Kalimantan was expected to open the event, with the Kota Banjarmasin Mayor expected to host the welcoming reception for the participants.

Wide-ranging topics on development in Borneo would be debated, such as the economy, rural-urban interface, social interactions, job patterns, informal sector, ethnicity, politics and ecology.

"The conference is borne out of an awareness that scholars in Sarawak, Sabah, Brunei and the four provinces of Kalimantan not only differ markedly in their notion of knowledge, that is of epistemology, but also on the notion of human existence, which is ontology.

"As a consequence, we may be missing out on a tremendous wealth of knowledge that researchers of each of the countries, states, and provinces in Borneo have constructed so far," said Halim in the press release.

The conference series was therefore conceived as another regional forum to consolidate cooperation in the development of social scientific knowledge on the social transformation of Borneo.

Particular attention would be paid to enthusiastic young academics who have done research on Borneo, but who somehow have not found their way to larger conferences in the region.

Of the 53 conference papers, 18 papers would be from Sarawak, four from Sabah, two from Peninsular Malaysia, two from Brunei, and 27 from the four Kalimantan provinces.

Papers from Sarawak will touch on issues related to the economy, politics, fine arts, language, environment, education and social interactions. Fifty participants from every part of Borneo, except Central Kalimantan and South Kalimantan attended the first of the conference series held in August 2005 at Unimas campus.

The second one was held in August the following year in Pontianak, where the entire Borneo region was represented.

"As in past conferences, Unimas' Institute of East Asian Studies and its Faculty of Social Sciences now play the role of an organising institution while Universitas Tanjungpura and Universitas Lambung Mangkurat as participating institutions," said Halim.