

'Momogun' proposed as inclusive Sabah ethnic identity

KOTA KINABALU: The term 'Momogun' has been proposed as a shared identity for Sabah's indigenous groups, replacing the acronym 'KDMR', referring to Kadazan, Dusun, Murut and Rungus, which is seen as insufficiently inclusive.

Sabah Institute for Development Studies (IDS) chief executive officer, Prof Datuk Dr Ramzah Dambul, said the KDMR acronym should be reassessed as it is viewed as systemically marginalising certain ethnic groups.

He explained that the term is dominated by representation from the Dusunic cluster, including Kadazan and Dusun, and the Murutic group, such as Murut, but lacks representation from the Paitanic cluster, including the Sungai community.

The proposal is strongly supported by a resolution from the Momogun Convention in August 2024, where 74 ethnic associations across Sabah agreed to adopt 'Momogun' as a common identity.

"As such, 'Momogun' should be elevated as a more generic,

equitable and inclusive umbrella identity to unite the three main clusters - Dusunic, Murutic and Paitanic-without discriminatory sentiment," he told Bernama.

The term 'Momogun' refers to original inhabitants, landowners and early settlers, derived from the old local word 'Pogun', meaning ancestral land.

It is also broadly equivalent to 'indigenous' or 'native' in English.

Sabah is home to 35 indigenous groups and more than 200 sub-ethnic communities, speaking over 50 languages and around 90 dialects.

Ramzah, a former deputy vice-chancellor of Universiti Malaysia Sabah, stressed that adopting the term would not erase distinct ethnic identities.

"Communities will still identify with their respective groups, such as Dusun Bundu, Rungus or Lundayeh. 'Momogun' serves only as a unifying label, replacing KDMR, which does not reflect Sabah's unique socio-cultural diversity," he said.

From a public policy perspective, he said, unifying communities under the

'Momogun' identity is crucial as a common denominator in national demographic statistics.

Ramzah also likened the move to the successful grouping of 'Orang Asli' in Peninsular Malaysia and the 'Dayak' identity in Sarawak.

He said that consolidating diverse sub-ethnic groups into a larger, unified data category would enable more accurate and effective policymaking.

"It would facilitate targeted allocation of resources and interventions, particularly in addressing rural poverty, economic access and educational opportunities in Sabah," he stressed.

Therefore, he called on the Kadazandusun Cultural Association to formally recognise the term 'Momogun' to lend institutional legitimacy to the grassroots resolution.

"Such recognition would not only foster a more harmonious Kaamatan Festival this month, but also create space for more holistic policy governance for Sabah's indigenous communities in the future," he added. — Bernama



The Chief Conservator of Forests, Datuk Zulkifli Suara (third right), receiving a souvenir from Dr Arthur Chung, witnessed by STIA President, PJ Tan, TAS President, Norman Wong, and other senior forestry officials on stage.

Workshop to drive sustainable timber plantation growth

SEPILOK: The Sabah Forestry Department, in collaboration with the Sabah Timber Industry Association and Timber Association of Sabah, organised a workshop titled 'Sustainable Timber Future: Market Trends & Strategic Partnerships for Plantation Growth' to advance forest plantation development and strengthen the state's timber market competitiveness.

Held at the Rainforest Discovery Centre, the programme was facilitated by the Forest Plantation Programme of the Forest Research Centre in Sepilok and drew more than 100 participants from across the forestry and timber ecosystem.

Attendees comprised representatives from upstream and downstream industries, companies, associations, non-governmental organisations,

certification bodies and smallholders.

Chief Conservator of Forests Datuk Zulkifli Suara, in previewing the event, emphasised the need for stronger collaboration and strategic alignment to tackle industry challenges.

"Forest plantation development plays a critical role in ensuring a sustainable and secure timber supply for the future. However, the sector continues to face challenges such as high capital requirements, long gestation periods, and the need for modernised processing capabilities.

This workshop serves as a platform to explore solutions, share knowledge and foster strategic partnerships," he said.

The programme featured sessions on timber market

trends, certification and legality frameworks, financing opportunities, and research-driven approaches to plantation management.

Participants also engaged in discussions on improving plantation development, strengthening logistics, and enhancing policy support mechanisms.

The workshop further promoted awareness of sustainable forest management practices, reforestation efforts, and the importance of certification in meeting international market expectations.

The event strengthened industry coordination and generated actionable insights to support the continued growth of a resilient and sustainable plantation forestry sector in Sabah.

Kendylife marks 20-year journey with debut Sabah exhibition

KOTA KINABALU: Malaysian doodle artist and creative director Kendrick Ng, better known as Kendylife, has returned to his home state to stage his first-ever anniversary exhibition, celebrating two decades of artistic exploration and storytelling.

Titled 'Lines That Became Stories', the exhibition was officially launched here on Tuesday in a ceremony officiated by Sabah State Assembly Deputy Speaker Datuk Al Hamba Lujar.

The exhibition marks a significant milestone for the Tenom-born artist, whose creative journey began in a small town before expanding beyond Sabah to Peninsular Malaysia and international platforms including Singapore, the Philippines, Australia and the United Kingdom.

Despite his growing global presence, Kendrick described the exhibition as a meaningful homecoming.

"To finally have my first major exhibition in Sabah, surrounded by a community that understands and supports creative growth, is something I'm truly thankful for," he said.

Hosted at Tinggi Tinggi Creative Hub, the exhibition showcases a wide range of works spanning 20 years, from early sketches and self-published zines to collaborative projects and more refined visual narratives.

More than a retrospective,



Datuk Al Hamba (centre) with Kendrick Ng (right) and invited guests during the launch of the exhibition in Kota Kinabalu.

the exhibition aims to inspire dialogue and nurture the next generation of creatives in Sabah.

Kendrick said the exhibition is driven by a broader vision to strengthen collaboration among local creatives, promote education and appreciation of art, and encourage

entrepreneurship and creative thinking within the community.

Running from May 1 to June 30, the exhibition is open daily from 10am to 6pm, except Mondays and selected public holidays.

The event is supported by various partners, including

Sakura Color Malaysia, Gsoft Malaysia, Kimmen Association Tenom Sabah, Life Water Berhad, Tem Tem Sabah, Bauertech Industries, Borenos Fried Chicken and One Roof, along with community collaborators such as AniManGaki, Hobbycon Sabah and Otakyuni Sarawak.

Police detain five 'Geng Atan' members in Sungai Petani

ALOR SETAR: Police have detained five suspects, including a married couple believed to be members of the 'Geng Atan', who acted as runners for an illegal moneylending syndicate and were actively involved in criminal intimidation around Sungai Petani.

Kedah Police Chief Datuk Adli Abu Shah said police received a report on April 16 from a 27-year-old man, who claimed that his vehicle parked in front of his house was set on fire after he failed to repay a loan obtained online.

"A series of raids and arrests were conducted starting April 26, leading to the arrest of four men and one woman aged between 31 and 43. Initial screening found all suspects were tested positive for drugs and had prior criminal records," he told a press conference on Tuesday.

He said further investigations revealed that all suspects acted as hired executors to carry out criminal acts such as delivering warning notes, splashing paint and burning victims' vehicles.

"They received instructions from a 'mastermind' who is still at large. After receiving orders, they would carry out their respective tasks and were paid between RM300 and RM600 depending on the type of criminal act committed," he said.

Adli said the group, which has been active since February, was also found to have recruited other individuals, including drug addicts, to carry out these activities and the arrest of the five suspects had enabled them to

solve 11 reported cases.

He said police are tracking down two more suspects believed to be members of the 'Geng Atan' and the case is being investigated under Section 5(2) of the Moneylenders Act 1951, Sections 435 and 427 of the Penal Code, as well as Sections 12(2) and 15(1) of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952.

"I would like to advise the public not to borrow from loan sharks. For example, in this case, the victim applied for a RM200 loan but only received RM150 from the loan shark. Although he had fully repaid the loan, the suspects continued to harass him.

"This is the consequence of borrowing from loan sharks," he said.

In an unrelated case, he said police arrested a 45-year-old local man who worked as a mechanic and seized two pistols, two air rifles, one imitation pistol, live ammunition, steel pellets and several other items in a 12:30am raid at a vehicle repair premises in Baling on May 1.

"Preliminary investigations found that the suspect purchased the firearms from a friend in a neighbouring country, while the air rifles were self-assembled. The suspect claimed that all the firearms were for his personal collection," he said.

He added that a urine test found the suspect positive for methamphetamine and he has been remanded until this Thursday for investigations under Section 7 of the Firearms Act 1971, as well as Section 8(a) and Section 36 of the Arms Act 1960. — Bernama

Sepilok Jazz returns in September with global lineup, conservation focus

SANDAKAN: The fifth edition of Sepilok Jazz will return on Sept 4-5 at the Rainforest Discovery Centre (RDC), featuring an expanded international lineup alongside a continued focus on conservation.

Organised by Friends of Sea Turtles Education and Research (FOSTER), the annual festival has grown into one of Sabah's key eco-cultural events blending music, community engagement and environmental advocacy.

Over 5,000 visitors are expected to attend this year — its largest turnout to date — reflecting steady growth since its inception in 2022.

FOSTER president Alexander Yee Kok Tsen said the festival is designed to go beyond entertainment, serving as a platform to support conservation efforts, particularly sea turtle protection initiatives on Libaran Island.

"Proceeds from ticket sales

are channelled into ongoing conservation work, contributing to the successful release of more than 45,000 sea turtles to date," he said during the Night of Groove event held in conjunction with International Jazz Day celebrations recently.

"By attending Sepilok Jazz, audiences become active contributors to conservation, transforming music appreciation into meaningful environmental action," he added.

The 2026 edition is supported by the Sabah Tourism Board, reinforcing its role in promoting Sabah as a leading eco-cultural destination.

Headlining this year's festival is Malaysian singer Shila Amal, whose international following, particularly in China, is expected to boost the event's global appeal.

Sepilok Jazz music director Cheong Kok Ann said her participation is a major highlight.

"Her presence reinforces



Yee (fifth left) with (from third right) Cheong, Hii, local artist Amado Degullacion Jr and other invited guests during the event.

our commitment to elevating Malaysian talent on an international platform, while also helping to promote Sepilok Jazz to a wider global audience," he said, adding that her involvement

also supports initiatives beyond music including conservation.

In addition to Shila, the festival will feature Malaysian jazz musicians alongside performers from Italy, Indonesia, Singapore

and China, showcasing a mix of modern, contemporary, fusion and world music.

Beyond performances, Sepilok Jazz continues to support local entrepreneurs and small

businesses while providing exposure for emerging artists and youth talent.

The festival has also expanded its development programmes, including Bakat Sepilok Jazz, which attracted more than 120 contestants this year, as well as a youth ambassador initiative led by Sabah-based musician Ivan Hii.

From a modest gathering of about 150 attendees in 2022, Sepilok Jazz has evolved into a multi-faceted festival featuring workshops, competitions and international collaborations.

Its rainforest setting at the RDC remains central to its identity, offering audiences an immersive experience where music and nature converge.

With growing international participation and continued stakeholder support, Sepilok Jazz 2026 is set to further strengthen its role as a platform connecting culture, conservation and community in Sabah.