

Sabah to name 500 islands in its waters

By MUGUNTAN VANAR

KOTA KINABALU: Sabah will undertake a comprehensive programme to give names to some 500 islands, some of them inhabited, within its territorial waters.

Chief Minister Datuk Musa Aman said the programme will be undertaken by the Tourism, Culture and Environment Ministry together with other relevant government departments to ensure that all the islands were given a name and gazetted.

“We believe that there are about 400 to 500 islands without an official name,” he said after opening the 4th Tourism Promotion Organisation for the Asia-Pacific Cities (TPO) general assembly here on Monday.

Musa said this when asked about fears raised by a University Malaysia Sabah (UMS) study that showed that many islands in Sabah were not named, which could lead to future territorial disputes with neighbouring countries.

UMS International Law Studies lecturer Dr Marja Azlima said the Government needed to be proactive in naming the islands whether big or small so as to avoid overlapping claims like that of Ambalat between Malaysia and Indonesia, and Batu Putih between Malaysia and Singapore.

She cautioned that unnamed islands would be focal points for overlapping claims between neighbours and should be addressed now to overcome future issues.

Musa said that the naming or renaming of islands within Malaysian territory would be tabled to Cabinet for approval before they are gazetted.