

## UGM Asked to Develop Pepper in Bangka Belitung

Monday, 30 April 2018 WIB, By: Marwati



Rector of UGM, Prof. Ir. Panut Mulyono, M.Eng., D.Eng., met with alumni who reside in Bangka Belitung islands province on Sunday evening (29/4) in BW Suite Hotel Belitung.

The Rector explored ideas from the alumni related to areas of cooperation that can be realised to help the advancement of the region.

"We continue to communicate with UGM alumni to get accurate information on what's required by the region and assess areas of opportunities for cooperation with the local governments so that development goals can be more quickly and equally realised," he said.

He mentioned some of the cooperation already going on in Bangka Belitung include spices agriculture, evaluation and verification of construction data of Air Anyir Steam Power Generator, and doctoral programme assistance. Going forward, the cooperation will include pepper and mushroom cultivation and other resources.

"Development of other sector will be very potential to materialise after the development of tin no

longer became the main sector," he said.

According to the Rector, those forms of cooperation were not apart from the contribution of UGM Alumni Association (Kagama) that continued to establish communication with their alma mater. "The various forms of collaboration can be achieved due to the support from everyone and Kagama that always works in synergy with the alma mater through related regional governments and agencies," he said.

In a dialogue guided by Dr. Paripurna, UGM Vice-Rector for Cooperation and Alumni, it was revealed that the number of alumni working at Bangka Belitung province was 290 people who were mostly bureaucrats and civil servants.

Chairman of Kagama Belitung, Dedi Suranto, ST., said generally members of Kagama in Belitung were state apparatuses while East Belitung they occupied strategic positions.

"We try to bring together alumni from Bangka-Belitung so altogether they can contribute more to advancing this region," he said. He also expected that more young people from Belitung would get admitted at UGM.

Chairperson of Kagama Bangka Belitung Province, Warsongko, said UGM could assist in agricultural development for pepper cultivation. He said pepper was the main source of livelihoods in the region. "We're short of five million of new seeds. We hope UGM experts can help us out through plant tissue culture," he said.

He also expected the development of cultural festival by UGM as a tourist attraction apart from natural tourism. "We know there is the Centre for Tourism Studies at UGM that can help develop this culture," he said.

Similar hopes were shared by Mathur Noviansyah, alumnus of Architecture that wanted UGM to help develop tourism potential of East Belitung, the birthplace of the *Laskar Pelangi* (Rainbow Troops) novel and subsequent movie.

Assistant to Regent of Belitung, Jasagung Hariyadi, revealed the number of travellers to Belitung had increased annually from 5,000 in the 90s to 270 thousand currently. "Now we're thinking on how to attract travellers from foreign countries and we're dreaming to have direct flights from Malaysia, Singapore and China to Belitung," he said.



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