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HAPPY DEEPAVALI ... Hindu Priest Krishnan Velandi, 61, putting garland of flowers on the deity of Sri Maha Mariaman at the Sri Maha Mariaman Hindu Temple at Batu Lintang in Kuching yesterday in preparation for the Deepavali or Festival of Lights. Today, Hindus in Kuching join millions others all over the world to celebrate Deepavali. PHOTO: RAMIDI SUBARI

The Management and Staff of New Sarawak Tribune and Tribune Press Sdn Bhd wish Hindu readers Happy Deepavali. Publication will be as usual tomorrow.

Ready to up Sarawak rice output

KUCHING: Sarawak is ready to collaborate with experts and scientists from abroad to enhance rice production in the state, said Minister of Modernisation of Agriculture Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Alfred Jabu ak Numpang.

According to Jabu, the state has already been acknowledged for its commercially potential rice varieties, such as the *Bario*, *Biris* and *Bajong* which have obtained Geographical Indication (GI) certification from the Malaysian Intellectual Property Corporation (MyIPO).

"Sarawak has the potential of producing more varieties through the sharing of expertise and research with experts from outside the country," he said at the Sarawak Rice Conference 2011 held at the Riverside Majestic Hotel here yesterday.

The conference, themed "Sarawak Specialty Rice Transformation Programme: Challenges and Strategic Approaches", was organised by State Agriculture Department in collaboration with Agriculture Chemicals (M) Sdn Bhd and the Institute of Agriculture Scientists (SIAS).

Jabu, who is also Deputy Chief Minister, said among the rice varieties that also had high market value were *Bali*, *Mamut*, *Selasih*, *Katek Merah*, *Lemak* and *Kenawit*.

"The unpredictable world climate and natural disasters that



DATUK Patinggi Tan Sri Alfred Jabu (centre), Assistant Minister of Agriculture (Farmers' Organisations) Datuk Sylvester Entri Muran (second left) and Assistant Minister of Agriculture (Research and Development) Datuk Mong Dagang witnessing the exchange of MoU documents between Haji Othman Hamdan (left) and Thomas Tan Eng Soon. PHOTO: TH LU

producing countries have prompted Sarawak to develop its paddy cultivation which is still using traditional methods of cultivation.

"I am confident that the experts and scientists at this conference can provide the input for more developed paddy planting methods," he said.

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