

UMS promotes conservation among students

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By Anna Vivienne

The Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) joined the world in celebrating the International Forestry Day recently in support of forest conservation and efforts to address climate change issues.

It is a time to share views and work together to ensure forests are suitably incorporated into any future climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

According to UMS deputy vice chancellor Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah, the celebration shows the importance of appreciating and protecting forests for the well-being of the present generation and those to come.

The event also serves to educating the community about the importance of fostering an appreciation of forests and to continue to maintain and conserve it, he said.

In this regard, the university hopes to grow and continue to cultivate a concern among campus citizens about forest conservation through its International Tropical Forestry School, he said.

Pointing out that small contributions do matter, Dr Mohd Harun: "Warnings about global warming have been very clear for a long time, and many people think not much can be done to address this crisis. But with a little effort, such as planting trees around our houses, is considered helpful in reducing the heat around our homes.

"It is estimated that a single tree can absorb a ton of carbon dioxide during its lifetime. Imagine with 300 trees planted; it can balance the pollution caused by an individual in her lifetime.

"I still remember the words of Chinese poet named Kwan Tzu. 'If you

think for one year ahead, then plant seeds. If you are thinking ten years ahead, plant a tree. If you think of one hundred years ahead, educate the people.' So I believe it's high time we undergo a paradigm shift in ensuring that our forests stay intact.

"We all know and understand that trees and green plants like our life pulse. Planting more trees will reduce the effects of pollution and global warming. Trees act as filters for air pollution, prevent soil erosion and cool the environment. By the nurturing love of nature, to some extent, it will be able to change people's understanding on the importance of nature and the greenery."

Meanwhile, the Dean of International Tropical Forestry School Dr Normah Awang Besar @ Raffie said the celebration held annually at UMS, themed 'Our Future our



Audrey Ambrose



Theresa Antonia Muthu



Kevin Fernandez



Mohamad Annawi Anwar

Forest: Nurturing the Green', focused on nature education, particularly in forestry.

"This is in line with the theme, which means, the sustainability of our forests are for the present and future, it should be developed since the start.

"This year several activities have been conducted. It came a day before, where the UMS students and staff orientation was held. This programme evoked good response where it is joined by students of School of Business and Economics, School of Psychology and Social Work, School of Education and Social Development, School of Social Sciences and the School of Forestry.

"Events such as coloring contests and edu-talk were also held where the participants consisted of schoolchildren from Year 1 to Year 6. Four schools were involved, comprising Tebobon SK, SK Bid, SK and SK Likas Darau. Each school represented 10 students," she said.

On the objectives, she said, "It is our hope that these activities can deliver information and education, directly and indirectly to the public and especially to the younger generation."

"At the same time, it can also improve their understanding, not only of the forest, but the natural environment. I believe that educational programmes such as this could change their perceptions and teach them to love nature," she said.

The World Forestry Day is celebrated around the world on 21 March annually.

Some of the university's active participants are students in forestry and related fields.

Theresa Antonia-Muthu, 22, a second year Forest Plantation and Forestry student, said she believes the annual celebration is very important.

"I believe that forest conservation is paramount in ensuring the balance of nature in every way. We know the benefit of the greenery around us. However, in ensuring that nature is conserved as it is, we need to know more



One of the activities at the University.

about it," she said.

"It has been said that where human goes, destruction follows. It is true in a way, but it is human that will be able to run studies on trees and find out how best to conserve or ensure that they do not suffer from diseases.

"In agroforestry the forests are used in systems and practices in which they are deliberately integrated with crops or animals on the same land management unit. This is to say that the integration is both ecological and economic interaction between the forest and people."

"In some other ways, nature benefits from human interference; in plantations for instance, the terrain is cut into gentle slopes which ensure that they are not too steep and impossible to travel on," said the girl from Kg Bahang Penampang.

Kevin Fernandez, 22, a third year student of International Tropical Forestry, said there are three key factors that nature are part of in human livelihood, and these are also points to sustainable conservation.

He said: "We need timber and other forest products like bamboo, rattan and other resources like herbs. We need those to ensure that our economy is generated. However, as in all development especially

in the rural or forest areas, such activities will create damages to the ecosystem.

"We are studying that; to ensure that there is sustainable management in logging or harvesting of timber. Even we optimize the economic production; we have to learn ways to ensure positive effects within the system and to minimize negative competitive effects.

"In the ecosystem; even as we study the flora and fauna, we also need to know how nature ticks, and how it contributes to life or the inhabitants within. Of course in the long run, we as humans benefit from the conservation of the eco-system."

Kevin said biodiversity, being the degree of variation of life forms within the ecosystem, is another point that should be taken seriously and studied, especially by aspiring scientists.

"We have to know the fundamentals of conservation of the biodiversity in our forests," he said.

Mohamad Annawi Anwar, 21, a second year student in the study of Natural Parks and Recreations from Perak believes that parks within a natural environment do not degrade nature.

"There are ways to amalgamate nature and development; its value adding in a way," he said.

Parks make it easy and pleasant for visitors to appreciate nature, to view the forest better and up close instead of just passing through, he said.

"I believe however that even as we create such features in our forests, we should be more mindful and aware about ensuring the environment stay intact and unscathed by human activities," he added.

Audrey Ambrose, 23, a third year student in Technology in Wood based Industry studies agrees with Annawi, saying that there are ways and means of harvesting wood in the forests that ensures its sustainability.

"We harvest what we want and leave the rest to grow, it's always like that. In wood production, we have to be careful and not over-harvest. I think that's the key word. We cannot go overboard with wood harvesting.

"In the long run, as humans, we have our needs and economic aspirations. We want to build homes and furniture and we want economic returns for that. But we should not compromise nature," she said, adding that her studies include this knowledge.

The students all agree that the World Forestry Day should be promoted to the public for the mere fact that it concerns everybody.



Forests under conservation programmes in Imbak Canyon.

