

BBEC's first year 'a great success'

By KAN YAW CHONG

KOTA KINABALU: The first year of operation of the Borneon Biodiversity and Ecosystem Conservation programme (BBEC) was described as "a great success" because heads of components exercised their leadership in ensuring all activities were implemented as planned, State Secretary Datuk KY Mustafa, said at BBEC's first anniversary dinner cum logo launching, here last Friday.

Mustafa, who is also the chairman of BBEC Programme Steering Committee, paid tributes to the component leaders and recorded his "special thanks" to Takahisa Kusano, BBEC Chief Technical Advisor, for the successes.

While the Committee steers implementation, actions on the ground are carried out by the Research and Education, Park Management, Habitat Expansion Management and Public Awareness Components.

The main thrust of BBEC, launched by Chief Minister, Datuk Chong Kah Kiat on March 25, 2002, is conservation of Sabah's endangered species, its world acclaimed mega biodiversity and ecosystems.

Citing some of the achievements, Mustafa said a total of 40 officials and researchers of Sabah State agencies and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) are involved in planning, implementation and reviewing the BBEC Programme—a joint endeavour by nine organisations composed of the State Government, UMS and Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA).

He said the integration and collaboration by nine State agencies, UMS' Institute of Tropical Biology and Conservation plus the inclusion of the Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) in the Park component together with JICA is "a unique characteristic" of the programme.

At the same time, JICA assigned to BBEC 13 Japanese experts, such as Chief Technical Advisor, Takahisa Kusano, long-term advisors assigned in the fields of Park Management

Planning, Community Participation, Environmental Education, Inventory and Museum Management and Systematic Biology, he said.

In addition, JICA in the short-term (less than one year) participated also in the field of wildlife habitat study, zoology (mammal), herpetology, entomology (butterfly) and the botany of lower plants, he said.

"Equipment wise, JICA has supplied an electron microscope, geographic information System (GIS), a specimen storing system, field survey equipment, computers, 4-wheel drives, valued at about RM3.4 million," Mustafa noted.

JICA has also sponsored nine senior officials and researchers from both state agencies and UMS to Japan for a highly rated six-week country focused course on the *Conservation and Management of Terrestrial Natural Environment for Malaysia* at a cost of millions of yen between Oct 23 and Dec 1, 2002 and five more are due to be sent for a similar course at the end of March.

"JICA has also built a sub-station cum visi-



Mustafa



Kusano

tor's centre at Inobong, Penampang for Sabah Parks which was completed in January at a cost of RM286,000, in addition to RM336,000 forked out by JICA while the Malaysian side spent about RM480,900," Mustafa said.

Working protocol and communication system within components and working groups were enhanced while a monitoring system has been developed as management tool for BBEC Programme, he added.

Other actions include "joint scientific expeditions"- the first in the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, and secondly at Crocker Range Park.

"These expeditions were conducted to study biodiversity, ecosystems and socio-economy related to conservation," he said.

On public awareness, BBEC has a website designed for easy public access, a newsletter, access to RTM's English and BM programmes, 13 reports in local newspapers, five times in journals and two other articles in Japanese media.

"The final report on study of Environmental Education in Sabah is being

prepared for publication," Mustafa announced.

The achievements were made possible through "good co-operation" and "close collaboration" among components and members of JICA.

However, he said the achievements need a yearly reflection and assessment.

"This is the right time to relook and analyse our plan of operation," he said

This will be carried out in March this year with a participatory analysis on Programme Design matrix (PgDM) and Project Design Matrix (PDM) of BBEC.

"The purpose is to realign BBEC operation for the remaining period until 2007," he said.

"The basic idea of any plan is that it must be practical. It is easier to implement practical things rather than theoretical concepts," Mustafa said.

One example for Sabah is the need to link conservation with sustainable development and social-economic development, he pointed out.

Also present at the dinner was Kazutoki Negishi, deputy Consul General of Japan for Sabah and Sarawak.

Negishi noted that the BBEC Programme has been "steadily developing" and is now bearing "remarkable fruits."

"I believe that the concerned organisations like the UMS and JICA and the Sabah State Government have been collaborating very closely and thus have been successful in implementing its aims to conserve the endangered, precious biodiversity and ecosystems of forests in Sabah."

Negishi cited the blood and sweat field trips where JICA experts together with Malaysian experts ventured into the forests to look for new species, lectured at UMS and schools, talked to folks living in the foothills of mountains in pursuit of conservation of natural heritage, conducted joint research, seminars and meetings.