

UMS' eco-campus a hit among tourists

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KOTA KINABALU:
University of Malaysia Sabah (UMS) eco-campus experience is drawing many local and foreign tourists to visit its beach, greenery and attractions like its Maritime Centre.



Regular local visitors Peter Wong and his wife enthused, "Every weekend after our routine visit to the Gaya Street fair, we proceed to UMS for our cycling exercise. Its roads are wide and safe, and the greenery wonderful."

According to Prof Dr Coswald Stephen Sipaut @ Mohd Nasri (pic), Director of UMS' Centre for Industry and Community Network (CICN), "foreign tourists are charged an admission fee of RM5 at the entrance."

While, locals are not charged any fee yet, the revenue helps UMS to make up for any funding shortfall by the new government operating under financial constraints.

On a good sunny day, as many as a thousand tourists will throng UMS bringing in revenue for the university that can fluctuate between RM3,500 to RM9,000.

UMS shares some proceeds with private operators of its sand buggy rides and horse riding attractions available for the public at its beach.

Prof Dr Coswald said that chalets are available for rent, and there are also business opportunities for local entrepreneurs to operate its restaurants or eateries, besides others to be considered and approved.

Recently, Prof Awangku Hassanah Bahar Pengiran Bagul, Nattana Simon and Hanisdah Saikim prepared and delivered a talk on 'Urban Ecotourism? Public perception on Kota Kinabalu's viability' at the recent 10th International Conference on the Heart of Borneo



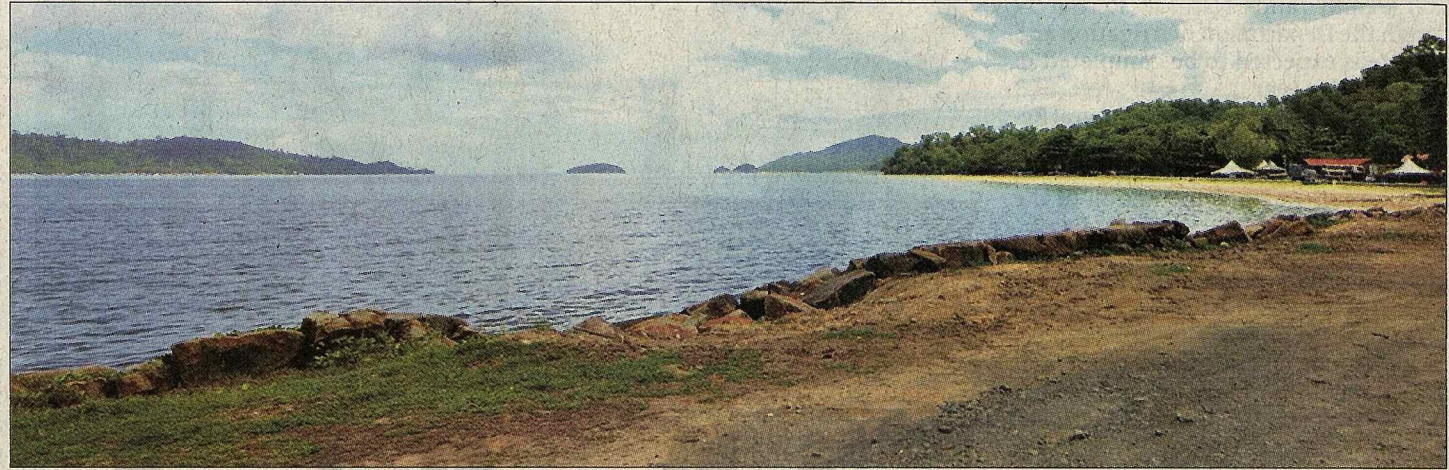
Japanese couple hiking among the greenery in UMS.

(HoB). They explained that the concept of ecotourism refers to tourism activities in natural, undisturbed ecosystem often misfits with urban environment.

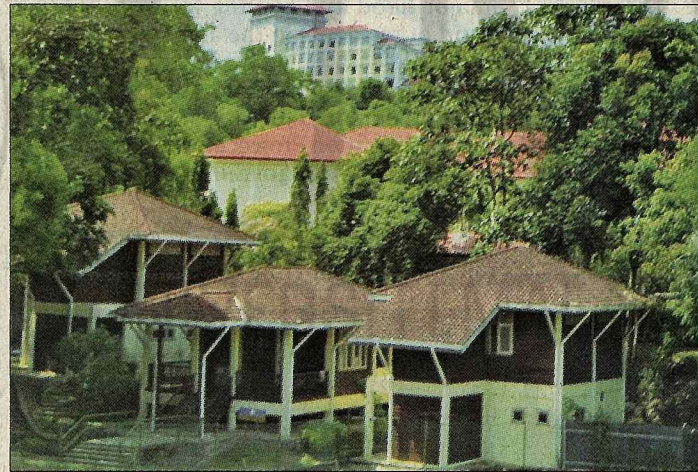
Kota Kinabalu is an entry point city to other destinations in Sabah and it is also strategically located in the South East Asia region, and it offers great potential to the country's tourism industry.

A recent UMS survey shows that over 90pc of local respondents and 93pc of tourists agree that Kota Kinabalu has the potential to be developed as an Urban Ecotourism Destination, capitalising the existing features of the city as perceived on the attractiveness of the ecosystem, conservation values and basic tourism infrastructures.

Urban ecotourism within Kota Kinabalu City could be an effective approach to enhance and preserve natural green



A view of UMS beach.



Some of the chalets.

areas. Even so, rehabilitation of degraded city forested areas is important in the effort to restore biodiversity, ecological functions and sequester carbon stock.

UMS eco-campus is a leading light as an exemplary model to be emulated, even as it stands out being an institution of higher learning with an ecotourism mission.

The city's taxi and Grab drivers make good income ferrying tourists to UMS for its limited eco-tourism experience.



Tourists at the UMS jetty, a favourite spot for taking photos.



Archery and horse riding available at the beach area.