

Aquaculture vital for ocean's wealth

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By JENNE LAJION

KOTA KINABALU: Aquaculture plays a crucial role in protecting and preserving the ocean's wealth by increasing fish supply from hatchery and grow-out systems that eventually lessens pressure on the wild stocks.

There is a pressing need to protect the marine ecosystem, rebuild depleted stocks through habitat improvement and sea ranching as well as to and increase seafood supply through aquaculture.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Vice chancellor, Datuk Dr Noh Dalimin said this at the launch of the Technology Transfer Programme in Fish Seed Production Techniques workshop yesterday.

The text of his speech was read by deputy vice chancellor (research and innovation), Datuk Dr Kamaruzaman Ampon.

"When aquatic food supplies increased, pressure on the natural population will obviously decline," he said. "Therefore scientists, must strive to make this a reality."

Dr Noh added that he was also informed that aquaculture of many species consumes more fish than what it actually produces.

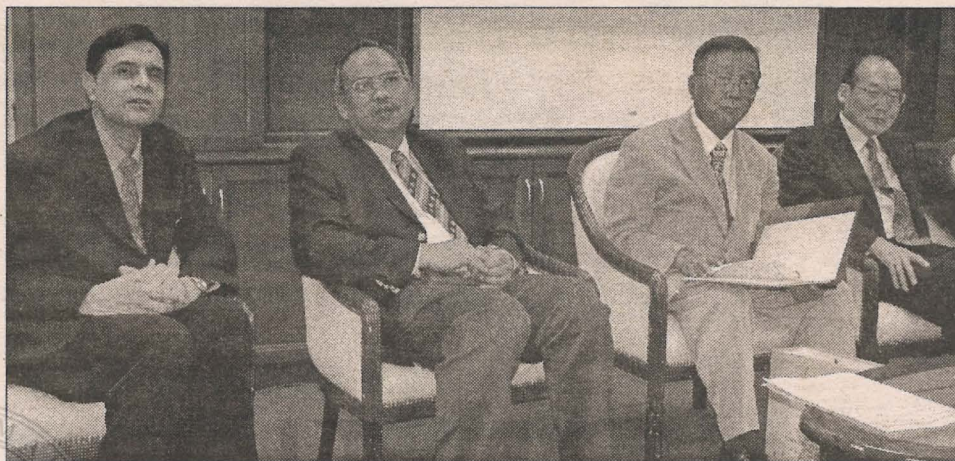
"The ocean is human's last frontier on earth for exploration and exploitation. The continued abuse of the sea will deprive our future generations of the rich marine heritage that we are blessed with," he said.

Noh also went on to stress the need for sustainable seed (fries) supply, which is crucial for the growth of the aquaculture sector.

"Without seed supply, growth of aquaculture industry is inconceivable. All fish and shellfish farms cannot afford to run their own hatcheries.

"They depend on seed supply. Their farming operations will stop or close down if seeds are not available," he said.

Dr Noh also urged the aquaculture industry to increase their research and develop-



ATTENTIVE...(from L to R) Dr Saleem, Kamaruzaman, Masahiro and Akira at the launch yesterday

ment activity and to seek partners from the scientific community for a fast track approach to resolve the problems that traditional approaches have failed to resolve and for which, modern scientific knowledge in areas such as biotechnology was needed.

"I think the aquatic farming community should seriously consider seed production centers for only a limited number of high value and most popular species such as groupers, sea bass, snapper and tiger shrimp.

"This will prevent seed glut in the market and will bring down the cost of species in demand to affordable levels," he said.

In addition, he said, such centers should also be equipped with facilities and expertise in their operation of culture systems, brood-stock management, water quality management, nutrition, health and bio-security.

"It has to be very integrated, without which the production centre will not deliver the quality and quantity of seed required for aquaculture development," he explained.

Dr Noh also said that interest in aquaculture was increasing due to the growing number of interest in seafood for health reasons.

"People are seeking solutions to heart problems from fish. Recent years have witnessed an increase in consumption of omega-3 fatty acids to prevent cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, osteoporosis and disorders of the nervous systems," he said.

Dr Noh also explained that fish were a good source of vitamins A and D, iodine, selenium, fluoride, iron, zinc and magnesium which were food for the body.

The workshop organized by UMS and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) attracted the participation of several researchers from the Philippines, Indonesia and Laos.

Also present during the launch were Professor Dr Saleem Mustafa (Borneo Marine Research Institute director), Masahiro Obata (Consul General of Japan), Akira Murata (Director of JICA - Malaysia office) and Dr Hiroyuki Kojima (Senior JICA volunteer).