

Japanese songstress sings for 1,000 at UMS

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KOTA KINABALU:

Surprising hardly summed up the night some 1,000 concert-goers shared with versatile Japanese songstress Tokiko Kato at the Universiti Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) main lecture hall on Wednesday night.



Tokiko Kato

Save for the small number of Japanese expatriates who seemed quite familiar with the 62-year-old veteran's work, the capacity crowd was quite unsure of what to expect from the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) special envoy.

Whatever expectations the crowd had did not disappoint Tokiko. From the first song, Revolution, her powerful yet soothing voice drew in the crowd, which responded well despite having little idea of what the predominantly Japanese lyrics meant.

Staying true to her mission for ecological conservation, she seamlessly incorporated brief explanations in between songs, some of which she sang accompanied by her trusty acoustic guitar.

The highlight of the night however was her collaboration with local 13-piece ensemble, The Sounds of Borneo, with whom she sang a variety of original and cover songs, including her Japanese interpretation of Filipino hit "Anak" and local favourite "Jambatan Tamparuli", to the delight of the appreciative audience.

Also in attendance that night were Head of State Tun Ahmadshah Abdullah and his wife, Toh Puan Dayang Masuyah Awang Japar, Consul-General of Japan Masahiro Obata, Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Masidi Manjun and Assistant Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Karim Bujang.

The concert was part of Tokiko's six-day tour of Sabah, which is part of her job as UNEP special envoy - to learn about and disseminate information on ecological conservation and its many challenges in the Asia Pacific region.

During her tour here, she visited various eco-tourism sites such as Kinabalu Park, Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre in Sandakan, tropical rainforests and oil palm plantations in Kampung Dagat in Lahad Datu and the Tunku Abdul Rahman Parks.