

Examine issues in holistic manner: CM

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By Larry Ralon

KOTA KINABALU: Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman said all environment-related issues need to be examined in a holistic manner.

He said such a move was necessary in order to succeed in the bid towards a sustainable society by striking a balance in managing the natural resources and environment.

"In this 21st century, we have reached a very high level of material well-being, but at the same time, we are also experiencing the effects of increasing levels of environmental degradation with its threat to human life and ecosystems," he said.

In view of this the idea of sustainability has emerged as the core for a desirable future state, he said at the opening of the Second Southeast Asian Natural Resources and Environmental Management Conference (Sanrem) 2006 at Le Meridien Hotel here Tuesday.

The three-day conference themed "*Sustainable Development Towards Better Quality of Life*" is jointly organised by the Universiti Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) School of Science and Technology, and State Government's Science and Technology Unit.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Vice Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Noh Dalimin, joint organising chairpersons Associate Professor Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah and Fatimah Haji Jaafar, among others, were present.

Musa described the conference as timely and appropriate in achieving the desired objective of sustainability.

"Speaking of sustainability, we realise that no resource systems, nor the institutions associated with them, can exist in perpetuity. Changes in both are inevitable. What must be sustained however is the capacity for renewal and evolution in ecosystems, and innovation and creativity in the social systems," he said.

"While this is much easier said than done, a joint effort from multi stakeholders in terms of problem-solving to custom designing a solution is the key element for a successful approach," he added.

Musa said under the administration of Prime Minister

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry is committed to look into all aspects of environmental conservation and protection.

A national council on biodiversity and biotechnology, which is also chaired by PM, also looks at policy integration and co-ordination as well as implementation between the Federal Government and the 13 State Governments in the country where environmental and natural resource management are concerned.

"These measures are to ensure that our biodiversity position remains strong and secure, although there is still much more to be done," he said.

"Sabah is also endowed with biodiversity-rich forests and historically much of its economy is based on this biodiversity. Tourism including ecotourism has been earmarked as one of the economic drivers in the State's development since it is non-consumptive industry."

"By and large, such a direction is very much in line with the State Government's vision in ensuring its economy remains sustainable through environmentally friendly activities," Musa said.

Toward this end, he said, efforts were also underway to look into the protection of the forest for its rich biological diversity.

He said the recent announcement to place some 300,000 hectares involving Ulu Segama, Malua and Kalumpang Forest reserves under sustainable forest management (SFM) is testimony to the State Government's concern over the conservation and protection of vital bio-diversity resources in Sabah.

By phasing out timber harvesting in these areas by 2007, he said, the State will be forgoing significant revenue in the forestry sector.

"Nevertheless, we believe it is a decision that augurs well not only for the conservationist but also one that would support other economic sectors in the State such as ecotourism in the long run," he said.

Musa hoped that this year's conference would provide insights to shape regional sustainable policies in the future.