

UMS to inculcate sustainability in university, society

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K O T A K I N A B A L U: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has initiated a proactive step to mould individuals into movers and shakers for the sake of sustainability in Sabah.

This was launched through the university's inaugural three-day Sustainability Leadership Course with a small group of about 35 here yesterday.

"The main challenge for me as the person responsible for this cause in the university lies in overcoming inaction," said the university's EcoCampus Management Centre director, Dr Awangku Hassanal Bahar Pengiran Bagu, after the launch yesterday.

Awangku Hassanal stated that existing awareness of sustainability in society has not successfully transitioned and materialized.

"People are aware of it but they don't really want to do anything about it. This is not something that we want. We want people to take action and this can be initiated by nurturing 'sustainability leaders'," reiterated Awangku Hassanal, who also said that the course is part of the university's program and is in line with their emphasis on preservation and sustainability of the environment as an EcoCampus.



Awangku



Rasid

The different backgrounds of the participants, who include UMS' academicians, non-academicians and students, is an inclusive approach that encourages an exchange of experience through different facets of the university and communities.

Participants of the free-of-charge course are given theoretical exposure through talks facilitated by speakers from the university and Japan on the first day, insight into a sustainable natural beekeeping project in Tuaran on the second day and a visit to the Sabah Art Gallery Conservation Centre on the third day.

"In our effort to produce sustainability leadership skills, participants have to be exposed to examples of sustainability. So our visit to the sustainable apiculture at Kampung Tudan, a pilot project of Japan International Cooperation Agency - Sustainable Development for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Conservation (JICA-SDBEC), will give them that experience in the rural area.

"The visit to the Sabah Art Gallery will be a portrayal of the co-existence of beauty and green technology," elaborated Awangku Hassanal.

It is with hope that these experiences

will be disbursed and implemented by the participants' faculties and communities.

"If you don't want to lead your communities, class, department or faculty, you can inspire action through leading by example, such as recycling. Maybe after establishing your recycling bit in a period of one or two years you can inspire or invite people to join your cause.

UMS is the first Malaysian University to implement a campus wide strategic sustainability plan through its EcoCampus Blueprint and the first Malaysian university to be accepted as a member of the International Sustainable Campus Network (ISCN).

The university became a member in 2013 and was formally welcomed at Harvard University in June 2014.

UMS is also the first university in Asia to be a member of Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC) in 2014, said UMS vice chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Harun Abdullah.

At the beginning of 2015, UMS was ranked 244th in UI GreenMetric World University Ranking, a ranking system for Sustainable University, added Harun in his speech, read by his representative, Business, Economics and Accountancy Faculty dean Associate Professor Dr Rasid Mail, at the launch.

"Sustainability leadership is not just about being the industry leader in the effort but it is about leading in a sustainable way," said Harun about the empowerment course.

"We can conclude that this type of leadership empowers leaders and followers to create lasting local and global value for environment, society, economy," he added.