

Sabah's importance as environmental conservation training grounds attributed to success with training programmes

KOTA KINABALU: Sabah has become an important international training ground for integrated biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, said State Secretary Tan Sri Sukarti Wakiman.

He attributed it to Sabah's success in hosting several series of Third Country Training Programmes (TCTP) that were attended by foreign participants.

"On behalf of the state government, I am proud to say that Sabah has become an important international training ground for integrated biodiversity and ecosystem conservation and I am confident that it will remain so," he said in his speech at the closing of the third round of the TCTP held at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) here yesterday.

The text of his speech was delivered by UMS deputy vice-chancellor (Student Affairs and Alumni), Associate Prof Dr Ismail Ali.

Also present were the university's Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ITBC) director, Dr Charles S. Vairappan and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) representative to Malaysia, Tomoko Miyagawa.

The programme that ended yesterday was held for 20 days starting on Sept 8 with participants from Uganda, Kenya, Botswana, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia. Almost half of them were from Africa.

Meanwhile, Sukarti said the success of TCTP in Sabah was the result of commitment from Malaysia's Foreign Ministry and JICA to spearhead efforts on the conservation of tropical rainforests in Sabah.

Participants listened to talks by experts from universities, government agencies and non-government organisations directly involved in conservation efforts in Sabah.

They also had discussions and workshops to present proposed projects or action plans for their own countries by taking into account the experience and knowledge they have gained in Sabah.

TCTP consisted of formal classroom lectures, video presentations, field visits to forest reserves and protected areas in Sabah, interaction with local communities living in protected areas as well as discussions with conservation practitioners on the ground.

Dr Charles said more than 100 government conservation officers from 17 countries gained from Sabah's success in integrating all stakeholders in biodiversity and ecosystem conservation.

In a span of 16 years, ITBC has trained many conservation officers in Sabah and worked with local communities to enhance conservation practices.



Dr Ismail (second left) presents a certificate to a participant of the TCTP in UMS yesterday.