

Marine conservation – UMS signs strategic partnership deal

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KOTA KINABALU: The Borneo Marine Research Institute (BMRI), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has signed a strategic partnership with Sutera Harbour Resort (SHR) and Jebson & Jessen (SEA) to promote marine conservation and citizen science project.

The project, themed 'Sustaining Kota Kinabalu's Marine Heritage' combines corporate volunteering with funding for projects that meet a specific environmental essential in the region.

Jebson & Jessen, under their annual in-house corporate social responsibility programme 'Meet a Green Need' has delivered 11 environmental projects across ASEAN since 2007.

They will be sending volunteers from across the Asia Pacific region to take part in the project by providing hands-on support.

The signing ceremony was held during the launch of 'International Conference on Marine Science and Aquaculture Ocean Governance: Issues, Priorities and Strategies' at a resort yesterday.

UMS was represented by BMRI director Prof Dr Rossita Shapawi while SHR by its group chief operating officer Kenneth Goi Kok Ming and Jebson & Jessen by its chairman Heinrich Jessen.

Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation Deputy Secretary-General Prof Madya Dr Ramzah Dambul and UMS vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr D Kamaruddin D Mudin witnessed the signing ceremony.

In his speech, Kenneth stated this project will be a 'legacy', resulting in valuable database for both the public and private sectors, and for all stakeholders to appreciate and work together to protect our marine heritage.

"We are delighted that we have now found a good friend and champion of environment, Heinrich Jessen and the Jebson & Jessen (SEA) Group, to co-sponsor this project," he added.

"Problems facing the oceans have become so massive since the beginning of industrialised age because they are 'commons', not 'owned' by any single state. Shared natural resources deserve shared responsibilities," said Dr Rossita.

She added there is a need for governance to maintain the ocean for its various uses in a sustainable manner.

"Over the years, several of our Meet a Need projects have focused on marine ecosystems. We are delighted that in this International Year of the Reef another meaningful marine project could be identified.

"We could not have hoped



FORMIDABLE ORGANISATIONS ... Dr Ramzah and Dr Kamarudin (back right and left) witnessing (from left) Heinrich, Dr-Rossita and Kenneth signing the strategic partnership agreements.

for a more fitting project to cooperate on together with formidable organisations such as UMS and Sutera Harbour Resort," she said.

Kota Kinabalu lies on the fringes of the coral triangle, a region that is home to the highest marine biodiversity in the world with 2,500 species of marine fishes, 600 species of hard corals, 34 per cent of the world's coral reefs and 30 per cent of the world's mangrove forests.

The implementation of this project aims to increase civic awareness among the public to understand the importance of preserving and conserving the ocean and maritime in order to ensure its continuity in the future.

Some of the activities to be conducted throughout the programme include coral reef and coastal ecosystem surveys as well as beachcombing trips; to establish a baseline database of the condition and biodi-

versity of the seascape adjoining SHR, UMS and the Tunku Abdul Rahman Park.

This project, starting in 2018, coincides with the 3rd International Year of the Reef (IYOR) 2018, which is designated once in a decade. IYOR is a worldwide campaign to raise awareness on the value and importance of coral reefs and threats to their sustainability; and encouraging people to take action by protecting them.