

# Pact on marine conservation and science project

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KOTA KINABALU: Civic awareness to understand the importance of preserving and conserving the ocean and maritime is needed in order to ensure its continuity in future.

This is especially so for Kota Kinabalu, with the State Capital lying in the fringes of the Coral Triangle, being 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.

With this in mind, Universiti Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) Borneo Marine Research Institute and its strategic partner, Sutera Harbour Resort embarked on a co-sponsored agreement with Jebsen and Jessen (SEA) to pave way for a marine conservation and 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.

The signing was done between UMS represented by Borneo Marine Research Institute Director Prof Dr Rossita Shapawi, Sutera Harbour Group Chief Operating Officer Kenneth Goi and Jebsen and Jessen (SEA) Chairman Heinrich Jessen.

Among activities to be done throughout the project includes coral reef and ecosystem surveys and beachcombing trips to establish a baseline database of the condition and biodiversity of the seascape adjoining Sutera Harbour Resort, UMS and the Tunku Abdul Rahman Park.

The signing ceremony was done during the International Conference on Marine Science and Aquaculture organised by UMS at the Magellan Sutera, here, Wednesday, officiated by Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Wilfred Madius Tangau who was represented by the ministry's Deputy Secretary-General Associate Prof Dr Ramzah Dambul.

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

"We are delighted to have a good friend



**Signing of the marine conservation and science project between UMS and Sutera Harbour Resort co-sponsored by Jebsen and Jessen (SEA), with the project themed "Sustaining Kota Kinabalu's Marine Heritage".**

and champion of the environment, Jebsen & Jessen (SEA) Group to co-sponsor this project," he said.

Rossita in her speech said problems facing the oceans have become so massive since the beginning of industrialised age because they are 'commons' not 'owned' by any single state, adding that shared natural resources deserve shared responsibilities.

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

Meanwhile, Ramzah in the side line of the conference said the approach taken by the programme is unique because it not only focus on the fundamental science but also on governance issues, issues which are

related to the policy and how it should be structured.

"The conference is very strategic and the approach timely, because some of the problems faced in policy formulation in our country, especially in relation to environmental conservation, is we rarely get input on a large scale from scientists, from those who understand the ecosystem.

"I notice there is a gap between policy makers and scientists, sometimes the scientists is focused too much on fundamental science matters, while the policy maker is only subject to policy making.

"I think scientists also need to understand the policy process and formulation so they can provide appropriate input," he said.

He went on to say that among priorities of the Ministry is to provide input related to science, technology and innovation that comes from expert opinion.

"If we can get this, we can make our policy for environmental conservation better ... we know that Sabah, one of the attraction or sources of income comes from tourism, with better policies we can attract more tourists," he said.