UMS to become 'Low Carbon City'

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KOTA KINABALU: More than 60 per cent of the land area in Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is made up of landscaping plants and natural forests to allow for the natural absorption of carbon.

UMS vice chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah said the carbon absorption process would make UMS to be known as a 'Low Carbon City', as each road is surrounded with shady trees.

In line with the government's aspiration to reduce the carbon footprint by 40 per cent in 2020, the School of International Tropical Forestry (SPTA) at UMS has started stocking and absorption of carbon by tree planting in the university grounds since 2006.

In 2012, all first-year students planted their own 'foster tree' as a symbolic gesture during the orientation week, he said.

In addition, the agro-forestry at SPTA was seen as a model for sustainable development, whereby forest and agricultural trees were planted as carbon absorbers, serving as Plants Bank, used as learning and teaching location besides being a source of income for SPTA, Harun stated in his speech at the World Forestry Day celebration at UMS here yesterday.

Harun was represented by UMS deputy vice chancellor (research and innovation) Professor Shahril Yusof, who delivered the speech on the former's behalf.

He said World Forestry Day began in November 1971, when members of the United Nations agreed to celebrate the day on March 21. This year, the nationwide celebration was held at Universiti Malaysia Pahang and officiated by Menteri Besar of Pahang, Dato' Seri Diraja Haji Adnan Haji Yaakob.

Harun said World Forestry Day is celebrated in UMS annually, and the theme this year was the same as the previous year, namely, 'Our Forest, Our Future'. The theme was in line the aspiration of UMS to realize its eco-campus status, he said.

He also commended SPTA for its courageous move in choosing Dryobalanops lanceolata (or pokok kapur paji in Malay) as the school's official tree.

"Pokok kapur form the rainforest tree community that contributed to Sabah's economic development in the early 80s whereby Sabah exported logs as construction material to Japan and Europe.

"However, as (the number of) pokok kapur is on a decline, the awareness of its importance in terms of economic value and ecosystem function drove SPTA to choose pokok kapur," he stated in his speech.

Also present at the event was the dean of SPTA, Dr Normah Awang Besar @ Raffie.