

UMS the first in M'sia to offer eco-tourism tours

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KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has become the first university in Malaysia to offer eco-tourism tours to tourists.

Tourists throughout the tour at the university will have the chance to visit its museum, marine aquarium and museum, gallery, pink mosque and chancellor hall.

Besides that, orchid lovers can also spend their time at the Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ITBC) Greenhouse that has over 380 species of Sabah orchids as well as a nature trail up to the university's peak.

The programme, according to Community Development and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Jainab Ahmad, was launched as part of its initiatives to achieve a full-fledged Eco-Campus university status by year 2017.

According to her, eco-tourism accounts for 40 to 60 per cent of the Malaysian tourism industry and is expected to contribute more than 12 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product.

"Sabah is blessed with magnificent landscape and sea views not to mention the various culture and biodiversity allowing the university itself to explore into eco-tourism through researches.

"UMS through its academicians and educators from various fields is capable of producing and sharing more new knowledge besides collaborating with other industries as well as the community," she said.

Jainab explained that collaborations with other industries can lead to business



Jainab (second from left) during the launching of the EcoCampus book written by Harun.

ventures which contribute to the State's economy. She later explained that the university also plays a role in creating public awareness on the conservation of environment and cultures.

"I am glad to witness the university is taking proactive measures to combine all resources and strategies to implement the national aspirations in strengthening Malaysian eco-tourism," she said, adding that the products may involve attractions such as frogs, ants, butterflies, orchids and macro fungus.

"This will differ the university from the rest nationally as well as internationally. However, it is important that the researches fulfil the conditions set by the eco-tourism industry," she added.

UMS Vice Chancellor, Professor Datuk

Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah, also said the programme is implemented based on their innovative, relevant and sustainability principles.

Besides their effort in going green, Harun said the geography at the university has also attracted a lot of tourists, especially cyclists and outside agencies, to hold camping activities at their Outdoor Development Centre (ODEC).

He also hoped their efforts in realising eco-tourism aspects will be brought to the next level besides setting examples to those involved.

"As a higher learning institute, UMS carries the responsibility in educating and creating awareness among the public, especially in terms of sustainability," he said.