

By JASON JACK EBIT

KOTA KINABALU: Public awareness needs to be raised and the community needs to be motivated to better manage the oceans as a resource.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Borneo Marine Research Institute recently kick-started the celebration of the World Oceans Day to drive home the message.

Its director Prof. Dr. Rossita Shapawi said UMS wants to unite the community of nations around the world to increase public awareness of the marine environment and to motivate people to act for better management of the oceans.

"This is absolutely necessary for sustaining the benefits arising from the marine ecosystem," she said this in a statement.

World Oceans Day is a United Nations initiative. The theme this year is 'Clean Our Oceans'.

One of the activities carried out was a clean up of the beach near the UMS Outdoor Development Centre (ODEC) which experienced in recent weeks large volume of ocean debris washed onto it.

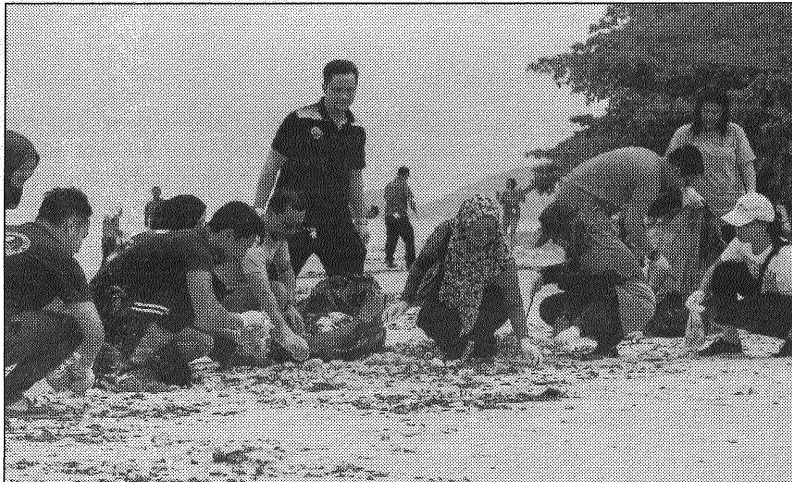
"It is an eyesore and a serious environmental problem. Like conveyor belts, the ocean currents transport the garbage, especially the plastics to distant places.

"The waste on ODEC beach appears to have originated from settlements around Sepanggar Bay. It has bottles, wrappers, straws, plastic cups and bags among other items," she added.

Dr. Rossita stated that such waste has caused the deaths of

UMS: More efforts needed in protecting oceans

NST 13.6.2018 9



Beach cleaning in progress by UMS students at UMS Outdoor Development Centre (ODEC) beach yesterday in conjunction with World Oceans Day 2018.

many endangered marine animals such as turtles and even birds that mistakenly swallowed the plastics.

She said that when plastics are left in the sea for long it will eventually break down into very small microplastic fragments which are difficult to see and continue to accumulate in the oceans and can cause harm to marine animals.

"Malaysia has signed the UN

Sustainable Development Goals, and "Goal 14 - Life below Water: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development" makes it loud and clear that we need to act to protect our oceans for our own benefits.

"In addition to removing the waste deposited by currents on our beach, we have lined up various activities including

Ocean Walk and Marine biodiversity exhibition in our aquarium.

"Besides that, there is also a pledge signing to bring the public on board in marine conservation and complying with our obligations under Sustainable Development Goal 14. These activities will also highlight the initiatives under the Coral Triangle Initiative," she added.