

12 Japan students in UMS' first Homestay Programme

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KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) officiated its very first Homestay Programme during a 'Handover to Foster Families Ceremony' in conjunction with the Keisei High School Study Tour, here on Monday.

A total of 12 students aged 16 to 17 from Hokkaido Sapporo Keisei 'Core Super Science High School' from Japan will be staying with six academicians and their families beginning from Monday until Wednesday.

The programme jointly organised by the UMS Institute of Tropical Biology and Conservation (ITBC) and the Faculty of Environmental Systems of Rakuno Gakuen University in Japan is part of the one-week study tour of the students in Sabah.

UMS Vice-Chancellor, Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah said the programme will be an excellent approach for the students to have real experience living with a Malaysian family especially in understanding the different cultures.

"I believe great bilateral relationships, even involving two nations, can be forged via the exchange of cultures and ideas in co-moulding universally endorsed socio-political values and attitudes.

"In the long run, the cultural and idea exchange, especially between foster family and the students will have huge impacts and outcomes. It will create a much tolerant and accepting world to live in," said Harun who is also among the foster families hosting the students.

Harun also said the key to contemporary nature conservation is through learning from one another.

"Nature conservation is much more than mere advancement in research techniques and astonishment in research results but rather it is a collaborative effort to encompass all parties for the betterment of all stakeholders."

Meanwhile, ITBC Director, Prof Dr Charles S Vairappan said the study tour programme, which began last year, will also see local students from SM All Saints have interactive dialogues with

the students.

He said the students accompanied by two teachers, who arrived on Jan 8 and are set leave for Japan on Jan 14 will still continue their daily activities at the institute but will leave to stay with their foster families in the evening.

Charles was also among the academicians to host two of the students.

Meanwhile, co-ordinator for the group, Chie Kosuga said the objective of the study tour is to help the students understand the environmental issues faced by Sabah and come up with solutions and initiatives to solve them and to also bring those initiatives back to Hokkaido.

She added that although most of the students have travelled to other countries, it is their first time to Malaysia.

Among the twelve students is 17-year-old Sana Toda who was excited about being in Sabah.

"I am very interested in the environment because I hope to pursue environmental education and biology when I grow up and in Sabah there is so much nature here," she said.