

Japanese students on attachment study program with UMS

BP 13-1-2015 5

By Nancy Lai

KOTA KINABALU: Tolerance and acceptance are governing factors that are imperative in contemporary nature conservation, said Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Vice Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah.

According to him, many conservation endeavors failed in the past solely due to the lack of human aptitude to tolerate novel and unorthodox strategies and mechanisms, as well as to accept the significance of communal participation in nature conservation.

Nature conservation, he pointed out, is beyond mere advancement in research techniques and astonishing research results, and more importantly, it is a collaborative effort to encompass all parties for the betterment of all stakeholders.

"Hence, the keyword is 'to learn from one another'. Let the foster families learn from our Japanese sons and daughters from the Keisei High School Japan as much as they are to learn from the foster families," Mohd Harun stressed.

He said this at the 'handing over' of 12 selected students from Hokkaido Sapporo Keisei High School to their foster families, comprising of academicians of UMS.

Mohd Harun is hosting two of the students under the inaugural homestay program of Hokkaido Sapporo Keisei 'Core Super Science High

School', where they will stay two nights with their foster families here.

"Indeed this foster family component of the Keisei High School study tour is an important milestone to UMS and Rakuno Gakuen University. It is also an important experience for each of the foster families involved and the Japanese students.

"I personally urge that the special relationships should be extended even after the eventual conclusion of the study tour," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Mohd Harun disclosed that the program started early last year and is the first of its kind.

He said the students would also be involved in activities by the organiser of the program, UMS Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation.

"Everyday, we send them to the institute at 8am and they have activities the whole day. In the evening we bring them home and bond with them," he said.

To a question on what he has planned for the two students that he and his family will be hosting for the next two nights, Mohd Harun said he would introduce them to their our culture.

"I have two daughters aged 19 and 24, so it will be good for them. We may plan to go to Japan in the future to have more interaction and will use the social media to keep in contact with each other. I will also bring them sightseeing

around the city and introduce to the students our local food," he said.

Meanwhile UMS Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ITBC) director Professor Dr Charles S. Vairappan, in his welcoming address, said that since last year, Keisei High School students have been visiting the institute to learn more about the efforts being championed by them in the conservation of tropical biodiversity.

"Visits from Keisei High School came about through a smart partnership that we have established with Rakuno Gakuen University in Hokkaido. This relationship has given us an opportunity to bridge both our nations in this knowledge transfer program of these young minds.

"In this program, we have also invited students from SM All Saints to have interactive dialogues with Keisei students at ITBC," he said, adding that at ITBC they are no strangers to understanding the Japanese education philosophy and their love for conservation.

Dr Charles said that ITBC has at least 14 years of collaboration with JICA through BBEC I, BBEC II and now SDBEC programs.

"The tropical biodiversity that we have in Sabah has been entrusted to us for the benefit of our future generation. Hence, we have been pioneering efforts by collaborating with researchers from Japan and United Kingdom to safeguard this treasure and sharing then



The students from Hokkaido Sapporo Keisei High School in a group picture with UMS officials.

with young minds is a very precious gift," he said.

Program coordinator from Rakuno Gakuen University for the program, Chie Kosuga, said that the group of students aged 16 and 17 years old and teachers arrived in Sabah on January 8 and will be flying off on January 14.

The objective of the study tour is to help students understand the environment and environmental issues in Sabah, she said, adding that they will bring back resolutions and initiatives from Sabah to Hokkaido so that they can help solve environmental issues there.



Dr Mohd Harun handing a memento to Dr Charles (left).