

Balance between tourism growth and environmental protection vital

NST, 18 OKTOBER 2019 2

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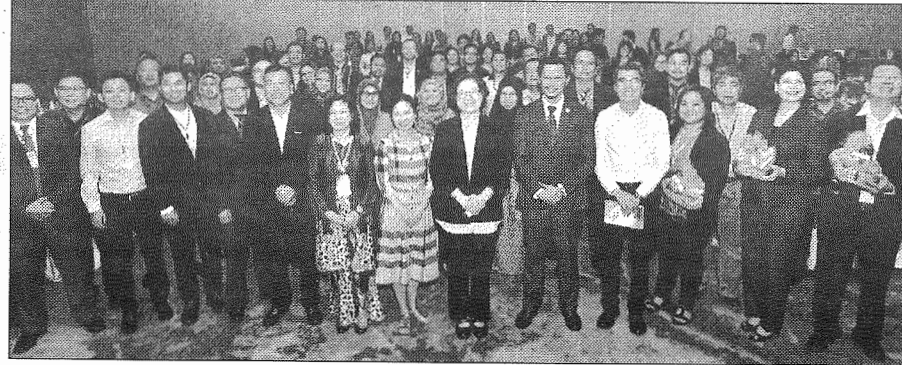
KOTA KINABALU: A balance between tourism growth and environmental protection is vital in this world's largest and fastest-growing industries.

Deputy Chief Minister cum Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Christina Liew said everyone of us should have a social responsibility and a strong commitment to nature because the natural heritage belongs to all of us.

"To manage sustainable tourism, policies alone are not enough.

"The harmonious relationship among local communities, the private sectors which are directly and indirectly involved in tourism, and the government, is the main essence in developmental practices to protect that natural, built and cultural environment while being compatible with economic growth," Liew said.

Speaking at the launch of seminar/workshop on 'Enhancing Profitability Through Sustainable Growth and Practices in Travel and Tourism: Embracing the Global Sustainable Standards' at a hotel on Thursday, she hoped the seminar will achieve its objectives and become a one step forward to transforming Sabah into a green destination.



Liew (6th right, forefront) in a group photo with the organisers, speakers and participants after launching the seminar.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) vice chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Taufiq Yap Yun hoped that through the sharing of experiences by participants, they would be able to identify, discuss issues and provide workable solutions to overcome barriers pertaining to sustainable practices in tourism.

"As a higher learning institution, it is important for UMS to play a significant role in promoting and strengthening education in all fields," he said in his speech read by UMS dean faculty of business, economic and accountancy Dr Raman Noordin.

We must work together to generate a more people-centered and socially responsible community, he called.

The key to harnessing the greatness of our travel and

tourism industry lies in the collaborative efforts of many entities such as learning institutions, hoteliers, tourism associations, government bodies and private businesses, he said.

"All these must work together in tandem for the betterment of our overall economic growth. The topics discussed would be significant for all stakeholders as we are now at a time of major global changes," Dr Tafiq said.

Director of Borneo Tourism Research Centre (BTRC), UMS Prof Dr Jennifer Chan Kim Lian said: "Efforts in transforming Sabah as a green destination require concerted efforts from various tourism stakeholders-government agencies, private sectors, and higher learning institution."

She said the seminar aims to

expose and nurtures the key tourism players the importance of embracing global sustainable standards and practices in the respective tourism operations and management; followed by sustainable training sessions for the tourism players before conducting auditing and accreditation process.

The two-day seminar organised by BTRC, UMS featured speakers Dr Mihee Kang who is director of Asia-Pacific Global Sustainable Tourism Council, Asian Ecotourism Network chair Masaru Takayama, Borneo Eco Tours managing director Albert Teo Chin Kon, Sabah Wildlife Department director Augustine Tuuga, Sabah Parks manager Ludi Apin, Sabah Tourism Board senior manager Julinus Jeffrey Jimit and Hilton Hotel Kota Kinabalu general manager Linda Pecoraro.