

All should work together to address earth's deteriorating biodiversity — UMS lecturer

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KOTA KINABALU: There is a need for all to work as one in order to address the earth's deteriorating biodiversity because the people's lives and livelihoods depend on it.

Dr Jephthe Sompud, Deputy Director of the Wildlife Sentinels and a senior lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), said this in his opening remarks at a public talk at the YouthPrep Centre, Alam Mesra, here on April 5 on Inspiring Biodiversity Conservation among the Generation Ys and Zs.

The public talk was co-organized by the Wildlife Sentinels and the Wildlife Guardian Club, a student club at UMS.

Wildlife Sentinels is a small non-profit Sabahan NGO that conducts conservation research on wildlife, and conservation education and awareness through public talks.

This was then followed by a video presentation of Wildlife Sentinels produced by Emily A. Gilbert (the secretary of Wildlife Sentinels) that showcased the active involvement of young Malaysian researchers through the NGO's conservation projects in Sabah.

The purpose of the talk was to educate and raise public awareness, and to inspire the generation Ys and Zs to be an



From left to right: Juliana Suanim Bakar (Creation Justice Commission), Dymna Richard, Dr Boonratana, Sister Calista and Dr Jephthe Sompud after the public talk.

important ally in efforts to conserve biodiversity.

Dr Ramesh Boonratana of the Mahidol International University College, Thailand, who is also the Regional Vice-Chair for the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Primate Specialist Group, was the guest speaker at the talk where he expounded on Inspiring Biodiversity Conservation among the Generation Ys and Zs.

Dr Boonratana's interesting and captivating talk, frequently spiced with humour, highlighted why we have had very limited success in conserving biodiversity despite the efforts and resources made available, and provided justifications for the wider society

to re-orient their lives towards becoming eco-centric, viewing ourselves as a part of nature rather than apart from nature.

He highlighted the fact that countries worldwide erroneously measured the country's development by their economic development instead of measuring it by their socio-economic development.

Dr Boonratana also warned that if environmental issues were not urgently addressed, then our economy and society would ultimately suffer.

He cited the collapse of past advanced civilizations due to their unsustainable use and extraction of their biodiversity and natural resources.

About 100 participants from diverse backgrounds and walks of life, including those from the Asia Metropolitan College, Masha College, University College Sabah Foundation, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Creation Justice Commission, Sabah Tourist Guide Association, Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA) and Borneo Eco Tours attended the talk.

The feedback from the participants was very encouraging, and generated a lot of challenging questions and discussions.

The overall feedback was best expressed by Sister Calista of the Creation Justice Commission in the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu (Catholic Church), "The public talk was great! Really enjoyed it, and also felt enlightened by Dr Ramesh's session. He was not only talking from the head, but integrated it with his heart and the universe."

In fact, the participants were unanimous in saying they wished to hear more of his talks and to encourage more members of the public to attend.

The public talk was made possible with sponsorship from the Sabah Foundation, Pangolin Consortium and from the Sister of Good Shepherd.