

ITBC's Biodiversity Festival hopes to raise awareness on biodiversity conservation

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KOTA KINABALU: The Biodiversity Festival 2019 at Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ITBC) Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is expected to help raise awareness on the importance of biodiversity conservation in Sabah especially among young generation.

Held from March 27 to 28, it was the first to be organised by ITBC which will promote fun ways of learning through activities such as bird watching, archery, Young Scientist at Work, photography workshop, and board games among others.

It was aimed at providing knowledge on biodiversity in Sabah, working together with agencies and non-governmental organizations to raise awareness on environmental issues, and nurturing interactions between the institute and the society through biodiversity and conservation-related activities.

UMS Vice-Chancellor Prof. Datuk Dr D Kamarudin D Mudin said the initiative was in line with the university's efforts to develop education in Sabah through its existing natural resources.

He noted that ITBC was one of the university's institutes which aimed to become a centre of research in the field of tropical biology and conservation especially in Sabah.

"Sabah is blessed with abundance of natural resources and as a centre of knowledge, UMS must take up the challenge to conduct research activities to develop science education especially in biodiversity conservation.

"ITBC has a lot of scientists



Dr Baba (second right) presenting a certificate to one of the participants of Friends of Borneensis as Dr Monica (right) looks on.

who have conducted numerous research on biodiversity and tropical biology and we hope that they will continue the effort to attain the target of becoming the centre of reference not only for local but international researchers as well," he said.

His speech was delivered by Dean of UMS Faculty of Science and Natural Resources Prof. Dr Baba Musta during the festival's launching ceremony yesterday.

Meanwhile, ITBC Director Assoc. Prof. Dr Monica Suleiman said the festival was a holistic approach to gather the institute's three produce – Borneensis, Borneensis Gallery, and Friends of Borneensis.

She asserted that ITBC has conducted countless research since 1996 with focus on the fields of taxonomy and biodi-

versity, ecology, wildlife management, eco-tourism, and natural products.

"One of our objectives was to become a centre of reference for biodiversity through our state-of-the-art facility, Borneensis.

"Scientists, both local and international, have come here to refer to the specimens for biodiversity, ecology, or medicinal purposes as most of us are taxonomists – we go into the forests to collect the specimens and identify or name them.

"We provide baseline data so researchers from other fields could refer the actual name and not simply claim that certain specimen could cure certain diseases and such," she said.

Set up in 2001, the Borneensis collection centre has four

rooms – Entomology Collection Room, Dry Collection Room, Wet Collection Room, and Herbarium Collection Room – with sophisticated facilities which could allow specimens to last for hundreds of years.

While all the researchers of ITBC are Malaysians, Dr Monica stated that the Borneensis has attracted international researchers from Japan and the United Kingdom among others.

With the organising of the festival, she said the institute also hoped to foster interest in science among young generation.

Also witnessed yesterday was the closing ceremony of Friends of Borneensis 2019 which was held on March 25 to 27 in conjunction with the festival. - **By DK Ryni Qareena**