

# Expanding Friends of Borneensis programme to Sabah schools

By DK RYNI QAREENA

KOTA KINABALU: The Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ITBC) Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is expected to expand its Friends of Borneensis initiative to schools across Sabah.

ITBC Director Assoc. Prof.

Dr Monica Suleiman said it was part of the institute's effort to raise awareness on the importance of biodiversity conservation in Sabah especially among young generation.

The programme which promotes fun way of learning had been conducted since 2015 with more than 30 participants

aged 17 and below involved every year from primary, secondary and home schools in Sabah.

As a centre of reference, she added that the team was also committed to providing environmental education especially to school children.

"The objective was to raise awareness on the importance of protecting the environment and biodiversity of Sabah and that was why we invited students because they will be inheriting these treasures.

"Not only that, we also receive visitors every week at ITBC where we would conduct biodiversity talks, interpretation of our exhibits and others to provide early education and awareness to the young generation in terms of environmental conservation," she said.

She explained that the initiative was named after ITBC centre of biodiversity collection – Borneensis – with the -ensis suffix derived from Latin meaning 'originating in'.

The centre houses specimens collected mostly in Borneo which is used for research purposes.

This year's Friends of Borneensis saw 39 students from 12 secondary schools,



Dr Monica (second row, sixth left) and Dr Baba (seventh left) with participants of Friends of Borneensis 2019.

nine primary schools and one home school taking part in the three-day-two-night event at UMS from March 25 to 27.

Among the activities carried out were jungle trekking, insect making, herbarium making, campfire, and mushroom foray.

According to Dr Monica, Friends of Borneensis has been well-received over the years with ITBC being invited to schools in various districts to

conduct conservation talks and activities related to environmental conservation.

While the programme has yet to have actual registration for its 'friends', she explained that the institute might consider setting up an association and create membership for students in schools.

"We have had a lot of friends of Borneensis but there were no membership registration...we might consider be-

cause once they have grown up and entered the university, they can always come back or study here," she said.

She was speaking to reporters after the closing ceremony of Friends of Borneensis and the launching of Biodiversity Festival 2019 here yesterday.

Also present during the ceremony was Dean of UMS Faculty of Science and Natural Resources Prof. Dr Baba Musta.