Balance between tourism growth and environmental protection vital

By PAUL MUI

KOTA KINABALU: A balance between tourism growth and environmental protection is vital in this world's largest and fastest-growing industries. Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Christina Liew said everyone of us should have a social and cultural responsibility towards 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 a 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 said the seminar hoped to encourage the tourism industry to achieve its objectives and become one step closer to transforming Sabah into a green destination.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) vice chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Taufiq Yap Yun Hock 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 of faculty of business, economic and accountancy Dr Ramin Nooraini.

We must work together to generate a more people-oriented and socially responsible community, he said. The key to harnessing the greatness of our travel and tourism industry lies in the collaborative efforts of many entities such as learning institutions, hostels, 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 Taufiq said.

Director of Borneo Tourism Research Centre (BTRC) UMS Prof Dr Jennifer Chan Kim Lian, who was in charge of Sabah as a green destination, encouraged concerted efforts from various tourism stakeholders, government agencies, private sector and higher learning institutions.

She said the seminar aims to expose and nurture the key_ip, especially the importance of embracing global sustainable standards and practices in the respect of tourism operations and management. It will be conducted through training sessions for the tourism players before conducting auditing and accreditation process.

The two-day seminar organised by BTRC, UMS featured speakers Dr Mihnea Kang who is director of Asia-Pacific Global Sustainable Tourism Council, Asian Ecotourism Network general secretary Tanay Kaplos, Luxury Eco Tour manager managing director Albert Teo Chye Kong, Sabah Wildlife Department director Augustine Tui and Sabah Parks manager Laidzun Sabah.

The seminar was attended by Sabah Tourism Board senior manager Jeffrey Juri and Hilton Hotel Kota Kinabalu general manager Linda Pecoraro.

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UMS, UNICEF to introduce Communication for Development Sabah programme

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KOTA KINABALU: A development communication approach that aims to further strengthen social development programmes in Sabah is being introduced to key stakeholders by a newly established research unit, the effort of a collaboration between Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Beyond the traditional method of providing information, Communication for Development (C4D) is an approach that seeks to understand people's beliefs and values, and the social and cultural norms that shape their lives, and it involves engaging target groups as they identify problems, propose solutions and act upon these.

C4D interventions are an integral part of project activities in some parts of the world, critical in addressing wide ranging social issues such as age at marriage, violence against children, discrimination against persons with disabilities and child health.

The UMS-UNICEF Communication for Development (C4D) Research Unit, under the leadership of Prof Dr Jennifer Chen Kim Lian, was launched on October 14 in the presence of the heads of the respective agencies.

"Most were unaware about C4D but by the end of the dialogue session, they saw it as a relevant approach for their work," said Dr Jennifer.

The unit and C4D to civil society organisations was positive to the approach that the participants were interested in wanting to be trained to use the approach for their respective areas of social development work.

"Most were unaware about C4D but by the end of the dialogue session, they saw it as a relevant approach for their work," said Dr Jennifer.

"The research unit will become a热门的 tool in social development programmes and on our part, we will provide support in terms of training and consultation on how this approach can be applied," she said.

"Through this research unit, we are also able to share new developments related to C4D with the organisations that we are engaging with, apart from conducting research on how to effectively use the C4D approach in the local context," she said.

Lai said a dialogue on Oct 14 to introduce the research unit, which is based at the UMS Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage, is in line with the university's Knowledge Transfer Programme that seeks to exchange knowledge with other organisations to create a better understanding of issues and promote the existence of a well-educated nation.