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Sime Darby to review conservation role if bridge approved

May 21, 2016, Saturday Shalina R.

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KOTA KINABALU: Yayasan Sime Darby (YSD) will review its environmental conservation activities in Sukau should the proposed new bridge be approved for construction there.

Its governing council member Caroline Christine Russell said YSD had established a partnership with Nestle Malaysia to reforest the critical Riparian Reserves along the Kinabatangan river.

This is done for forest connectivity towards conservation of the wildlife within the areas as well as to enhance the Kinabatangan River's health, she explained.

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"We are therefore concerned when informed of a new Sukau bridge that is proposed to be built in the area," said Russell.

"Yayasan Sime Darby will review and ascertain if its projects in this area will be affected by the construction of the bridge," she added during the inaugural Yayasan Sime Darby Environment Day 2016 in Sabah held at University College Sabah Foundation (UCSF) here yesterday.

After the launch, Russell told the media that YSD had committed RM3.7 million in Sukau.

"We are deeply concerned about the impact of the bridge, potentially on the connectivity. So we will need to look at the project, look at the viability of the project, and if the bridge is going to go ahead," she reiterated during a press conference.

According to Russell, YSD have committed RM129 million, of which RM81 million has been committed in Sabah alone, for its protection and preservation of environment and biodiversity conservation initiatives in Malaysia.

"Our vigorous support in various areas of environmental conservation has spurred us to carry out today's event – to increase the awareness and understanding of our country's rich biodiversity and the importance of its protection," said Russell.

"In line with this year's world environment day theme, 'Go Wild for Life' to stop the illegal wildlife trade, the Foundation is a major advocate of its 'Big 9' project, an initiative to conserve animal species that are classified as endangered or vulnerable. We work collaboratively with reputable NGOs and governmental bodies to save these endangered species from extinction through continuous research, conservation and awareness programmes," she added.

More than 1,000 people turned up at the inaugural Sime Darby event in Sabah, which was hosted by University College Sabah Foundation at its premises.

The day-long event saw numerous activities including talks, documentary screenings and exhibitions being held by YSD's beneficiaries and partners namely the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre, Borneo Rhino Alliance, Management & Ecology of Malaysian Elephant, Danau Girang Field Centre, South East Asia Rainforest Research Programme (SEARRP), Nestle Malaysia, Global Environment Centre with Sahabat Hutan Gambut Selangor Utara, Reef Check Malaysia and the Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Programme.

Some of the child-friendly activities were 'DIY Reef Fish using Carton and



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Eggs' by Reef Check Malaysia (RCM) and recyclable art competition, crossword puzzle challenge and environmental quizzes. Among the topics presented by YSD beneficiaries were on 'Maximising the Economic Benefits of Oil Palm Plantations while minimising their Environmental Impacts: SAFE Project' by South East Asia Rainforest Research Programme (SEARRP) and 'Moving Towards a Science-Driven Conservation of Malaysian Elephant' by University of Nottingham Malaysia's Management and Ecology of Malaysian Elephant (MEME) Project.

"I think the importance of today's event is to look at the variety of different environmental issues and also to showcase the work that is being done on conservation here and the variety of species and other efforts on landscape and seascape conservation," said Russell.

"We have a lot of our partners here today and we are excited that they are getting a chance to showcase their work.

"We have invited a lot of schools and students to come and we hope that the younger generation would really be the beneficiary of today's environment day," she added.

The event was officiated by Tourism, Culture and Environment minister Datuk Seri Panglima Masidi Manjun.

Yayasan Sime Darby governing council member Datin Paduka Zaitoon Dato Othman, UCSF Nantural Science and Sustainability Faculty dean Prof Dr Mustafa Abdul Rahman, as well as YSD CEO Yatela Zainal Abidin were also among those at the event.



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