

'Forum the right place to address forest issues'

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Sapuan (left) presents a memento to Len Talif. — Photo by Muhammad Rais Sanusi

KUCHING: The 'Forum and Workshop on Forest Landscape' is the right avenue to highlight the importance of addressing issues related to the sustainability of Sarawak's forest resources.

Second Resource Planning and Environment Minister Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan pointed out that good policy, governance and good implementation by relevant agencies and stakeholders were crucial in addressing these sustainability issues.

"Today marks a new direction for all stakeholders to channel the cooperative efforts in addressing this issue," he said at the welcome dinner here on Tuesday, held in connection with the forum.

Awang Tengah's text of speech was read by Assistant Minister for Environment Datu Len Talif Salleh.

Deforestation and forest degradation were global issues, the minister added, citing the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) which reported that an accumulative area larger than South America had been deforested and degraded across the world.

"As such, some kind of forest landscape restoration programme needs to be carried out. IUCN defines Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) as a long-term process of regaining ecological functionality and enhancing human wellbeing across deforested or degraded forest landscapes."

This forum, said Awang Tengah, was of utmost importance towards understanding the FLR and methods of

restoration, as well as learning successful models from industry players and agencies.

“This forum reflects the state government’s commitment and determination in addressing forest landscape restoration issues,” he said.

Awang Tengah reiterated that the state government was committed in upholding its policy on Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and would continue to enhance its efforts towards achieving its target.

“Sixty-five per cent of the state’s land mass is still under forest cover, which is more than the minimum requirement of our country,” he said.

The state government, Awang Tengah continued, had also targeted an area of one million hectares as Totally Protected Areas (TPAs) for the protection of its natural ecosystem comprising flora and fauna, as well as for enhancing its natural beauty and cultural heritage.

“Sarawak’s large and rich TPAs provide a platform for international collaborative research in developing intensive, practical conservation management procedures for bio-rich areas.”

The Research for Intensified Management of Bio-rich Areas (Rimba) project launched in 2015, said Awang Tengah, as one of the state government’s initiatives to open up areas for international research studies for the purpose of achieving sustainable conservation of its biodiversity.

“This project will showcase the state’s conservation effort in the international arena.

“Let us recommit ourselves to achieving our common goal in managing our tropical rainforest.

“I am hopeful that the efforts in forest landscape restoration would lead us in achieving our sustainable forest management objectives.”

State Forest Department director Sapuan Ahmad, Assistant Minister for Infrastructure Development Datuk Talib Zulpilip, Resource Planning and Environment Ministry permanent secretary Datu Sudarsono Osman and Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC) chief executive officer Wong Ting Chung were among those present.

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