

Ecological economy the way forward, says Centre

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KOTA KINABALU: It is high time for the global community to move towards an ecological economy, said Marta Szigeti Bonifert, the Executive Director of the Hungary-based Regional Environmental Centre (REC).

Speaking at a luncheon talk on "Transition to Sustainability through Cooperation" at Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort and Spa (Star), here, Wednesday, she said the current environment will require us to rethink our consumption and the waste generated from it.

With the world population increasing, especially in developing countries, it will be a challenge to sustain this growth, she said, pointing out that the increase would lead to random urbanisation, water stress and socio-economic disparity, among others.

"The cost of inaction is very high," she reminded and cited climate changes as among the threats which would become more serious if not addressed sooner. As such it is important to have the participation from the government, corporate sector as well as the people.

"We have the technology to make a difference but to go with it, we need the will," she pointed out, adding that long-term approaches are needed.

The technologies that we have now, she said, include the production of cars that consume less fuel and buildings that are energy efficient, among others.

There is also an emerging market for "ecotags" such as the production of household appliances that consume less energy, which help reduce carbon emission.

Then there is the carbon market, the production of new technologies as well as new resources for energy to be established, all of which are attractive areas to be developed further.

Bonifert said the REC is a non-profit environmental group that has for the past 20 years worked closely with European countries on matters regarding the environment.

It has worked on more than 400 projects and is currently looking for a partner in the Southeast Asia region to facilitate its programmes and projects.

Meanwhile, State Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Masidi Manjun said the talk was a reminder to Sabah to continuously preserve its environment.

He said the talk was an important forum to exchange views and experience on how to tackle the current problems faced by the environment regardless the location and ways to deal with it.

He, however, pointed out that one of the slides shown by Bonifert that showed the rapid deforestation in Sabah and Borneo as a whole, was inaccurate.

He explained that 53 per cent of the State have been gazetted as forest reserves, parks and wildlife sanctuary reserves, while 80 per cent of Kalimantan is still covered by forest.