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HRH the Crown Prince delivering his speech

HRH the Crown Prince at yesterday's opening of the 12th Asia-Europe Foundation University Programme at UBD. *Photos by M K Anwar*

Crown Prince upholds Brunei as green jewel

HRH stresses balance in growth and heritage

By CT Hj Mahmod

HIS Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office, last night stressed on the importance of forest preservation amid today's global challenges of industrial development and population growth.

HRH the Crown Prince expressed his concerns as he officiated at the opening of the 12th Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) University Programme hosted by Universiti of Brunei Darussalam with this year's topic focusing on 'Asia–Europe Co-operation on the Environment: towards Sustainable Forest Management'.

On hand to welcome the arrival of the Senior Minister at the PMO were the Minister of Education Pehin Dato Hj Awg Abdul Rahman, Minister of Development Pehin Dato Hj Awg Abu Bakar, and UBD's Vice Chancellor Dr. Hj Ismail.

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Crown Prince receiving a pesembah at UBD. ***Photo: M K Anwar***

Crown Prince upholds Brunei as green jewel

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Also present was ASEF's Executive Director, Ambassador Won-il-Cho.

Speaking on the topic, HRH considers sustainable forest management as an integral part of Brunei's development agenda, and regarded Brunei's forests as "an irreplaceable natural heritage".

"Like every other country in ASEM, we face many challenges in maintaining this heritage and its resources," HRH the Crown Prince added.

On the common challenges faced by Asia, HRH spoke of Asia's level of industrial development and population growth, which is in direct competition with the need to preserve forest areas.

HRH underscored that achieving a sustainable balance between development goals and the preservation of natural environment is still the core issue of all forestry management, and took note of the global challenges of climatic changes and the impact of pollution. This, HRH reiterated, "has environmental consequences beyond the borders of individual nations".

His Royal Highness highlighted Brunei's protection of the environment as an integral part of the country's development plans, and mentioned on the policy undertaken by His Majesty's government that controls and minimises logging and banning of logs for export.

In his capacity as the Pro-Chancellor of UBD, HRH was pleased to note that the ASEF University Programme has become an important platform for nurturing the development of future leaders in Asia and Europe.

"By promoting better understanding between our two regions, through a process of dialogue, personal interaction and collaborative learning, the ASEF programme creates opportunities for young people to work together to envision a common future and to solve common problems," said HRH.

Earlier, UBD's Vice Chancellor in his remarks cited the numerous threats faced by forests in both regions are our shared problems and problems of shared resources required shared solutions.

In attempting to achieve such solutions, dialogue is a necessity, said Dr Hj Ismail while adding that "without education, efforts to protect the environment – forest or otherwise - are unlikely to gain the support necessary to enable them to succeed".

This is first time the 12th ASEF University Programme is held in the Sultanate with 45 qualified students from both Asian and European countries participating in the two-week programme running from July 9-22.

Lectures will be organised under four modules on 'the State of the Environment', 'ASEM and Asia-Europe Co-operation on the Environment', 'Comparative Environmental Concerns in Asia and Europe', and 'Tropical Rainforest Management'. Also included are the four-day field study at the Kuala Belalong Field Studies Centre.