

'Everyone should protect environment'

KUCHING: Efforts to protect the environment will only succeed if all stakeholders—civil society and the private and public sectors—cooperate with each other.

Second Resource Planning and Environment Minister Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan, in citing the famous environmental planning concept 'think globally, act locally', reminded all quarters to be aware of their collective responsibilities to address issues such as global warming and climate change.

Organisations such as Sarawak Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Sarawak Housing and Real Estate Developers' Association (Sheda), Sarawak Oil Palm Plantation Owners Association (Soppoa), Sarawak Timber Association (STA) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), he said, must collaborate with environmental agencies such as Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB) and the Department of Environment (DOE) to ensure environmental standards and guidelines are complied with in all project developments.

"Implementing development projects obviously comes with a

price, in particular its impacts on the environment and rich biodiversity. Environmental issues include air pollution due to industrial emission, water quality contamination caused by industrial discharge, inappropriate disposal of solid wastes, river siltation, and sedimentation due to land conversion that resulted in flash floods.

"The anthropogenic activities coupled with growing world population and rapid development has contributed towards global warming and climate change. In Sarawak, we have the perennial transboundary haze that causes deterioration to air quality and long term effects to human health and socio-economic activities of the state," he said when launching the 7th Sarawak Chief Minister's Environment Award (CMEA) 2016 at Imperial Hotel here yesterday.

Also present were Assistant Minister of Environment Datu Len Talif Salleh, SCCI president Datuk Abang Abdul Karim Tun Openg and NREB controller Peter Sawal.

Awang Tengah, who is also Minister of Industrial Development, said the state had long recognised these

environmental issues and had put in place the necessary preventive strategies.

The Environmental Quality Act 1974, for instance, would ensure that industries and factories complied with the national environmental standards and that all natural resource-based development must comply with the state's Natural Resources and Environment Ordinance 1993.

"In addition, our development must subscribe to international standards, such as Equator Principal and United Nations Declaration on The Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP)."

On a related matter, he reminded the public to refrain from conducting open burning and to reduce outdoor activities due to the El Nino phenomenon.

He said while areas in the southern region, such as Kuching, Samarahan, Serian and Sri Aman, experienced wet weather with heavy rainfall, those in the northern region, such as Miri and Limbang, were dry.

The hot and dry weather, with average temperature of between 0.5 and 2.0 degrees Celsius higher than normal were causing heat waves and peat fires.