

Higher awareness of importance of protecting environment now — Adenan

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KUCHING: There is a growing consciousness among the people, especially the younger generation, on the importance of living in a good and clean environment.

Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Adenan Satem, who made the observation, said this was a significant improvement compared to 35 years ago, when people were not environmentally conscious.

“Back then, I talked about how it was that we ‘murdered’ our rivers, polluted our environment and had ‘kopi susu’ in our rivers, creating so much mess in our place and our environment became worse.

“Nobody knew what I was talking about some 35 years ago. They thought I was some dreamer, some crazy fellow talking about the environment,” he recalled when speaking at the Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB) 20th anniversary dinner and Chief Minister’s Environmental Award 2014 at a leading hotel here on Monday.

Adenan said it was only after the ‘Cameron Highlands mess’, Hulu Rajang logjam and after seeing how the rivers were polluted that people began to realise the importance of protecting our environment.

“So it is therefore our responsibility to take care of the environment.

“We have a role to play among ourselves. The children are more concerned about the environment than their parents and grandparents because they are educated early on how to love the environment.”

He said the people should value the environment as it is the only one they have, adding that: “Once you go to live in a bad environment, then you know how important it is to live in a green environment”.

Nevertheless, Adenan also expressed his pride that Sarawak was among the first states to create environmental consciousness through the implementation of an environmental department and insisting that the industries obey rules and conduct Environmental Impact Assessment before they start their projects.

On the Chief Minister’s Environmental Award 2014, he was happy to note that there had been a significant increase in participation from 39 companies in 2012 to 73 companies this year, which went to show that there was growing awareness of the environment among the people.

Meanwhile, NREB controller Peter Sawal said the state had made strong commitment to ensure its natural resources were sustainably managed and its environment well protected.

“The state’s farsightedness in establishing its own environmental law and environmental agency two decades ago has started to bear fruit.

“Now, 20 years down the line, starting with a few dedicated officers, NREB has transformed itself into a dynamic and competent environmental agency, having the necessary capacity and capability to help Sarawak meet its socio-economic objective in line with the state’s transformation agenda of becoming a developed state with high income economy by 2020,” he remarked.

Among those present during the ceremony were Assistant Minister of Environment Datu Len Talif Salleh, Ministry of Resource Planning and Environment permanent secretary Datu Sudarsono Osman and Sarawak Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) president Datuk Abang Abdul Karim Tun Openg.