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International Day for Biological Diversity to be a fun-filled day

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KUCHING: The Sarawak Biodiversity Centre (SBC) has lined up a range of fun filled learning activities and public awareness talks to mark International Day for Biological Diversity.

According to a press statement from SBC, the event will be held at its premises at KM20, Jalan Borneo Heights at Semenggoh from May 18 to 19.

Colouring and pottery painting contests for primary school students are among the activities in store.

Representatives of indigenous communities from throughout the state who have been documenting their traditional knowledge will also feature their wares and traditional games.

Visitors will have the opportunity to mingle with these communities and learn about how they have sustainably utilised plants and biodiversity throughout the centuries. SBC will also feature R&D demonstration, face painting, eco-snakes and ladders, paper art and origami activities.

The organisers have even thrown in an element of 'fear factor' at one of the booths.

Those who want to try their hands at making scented beads and candles will have a chance to do so on May 18 at 10am and 2pm, while those who would like to have a go at making handmade soaps will have the opportunity to do so the following day at the same times.

A clown will also be making his rounds shaping animal balloons for children during the two days.

A free health screening will also be conducted by a team from the Sarawak Medical Department while officers from the Tarat Agriculture Research Station will feature a tankful of live local freshwater fish.

Meanwhile, a series of public awareness talks have been scheduled on the afternoon of both days with topic ranging from plants in the state to edible mushrooms, orchids, our rivers and biodiversity and wildlife conservation in the state. Also on May 18, three known experts in their respective fields will be talking about flowering plant species, fungi and also orchids.

The talks will start at 1pm at SBC's Lecture Theatre with Peter Boyce to speak about flowering plant species found in the state.

Boyce who arrived in the state in 2002 after spending 15 years working at Kew Gardens has been spending his last 12 years in Malaysia and Thailand. Boyce's talk will be followed by a talk entitled 'Diversity of Macro-Fungi (mushrooms) in Sarawak' by Prof Dr Sepiah Muid of Unimas whose areas of specialisation is plant pathology and mycology. The series of talks for the day will conclude with a presentation by Prof Dr Maziah Mahmood of University Putra Malaysia on orchids.

Prof Dr Maziah's field of expertise encompasses plant biochemistry, plant biotechnology and plant tissue culture. She also loves orchids which she finds mesmerising.

After 10 years of research on the plants, she has made a career from learning about them and working on fragrant orchids. She is also a co-founder of Orchid Life, a BioNexus status company that produces horticultural products and services internationally.

On May 19, public talks will start at 2pm with a talk on Wildlife Conservation in Sarawak by the Sarawak Forestry Corporation deputy general manager Oswald Braken Tisen. His presentation will be followed by an awareness talk entitled 'Our Rivers and Biodiversity' by the Sarawak Rivers Board.

Each talk is estimated to be an hour long and those interested in attending either series of talks are advised to register with SBC by sending an email to biosar@sbc.org.my or by calling 082-610610 as seats are limited.