

# Continuing the good work

AFTER being named the world's best tourism village last year, Koperasi Pelancongan Mukim Batu Puteh Kinabatangan (Kopel) continues to focus its work on elevating environmental conservation efforts in the area.

Its chairman, Abd Sanih Nasri, said that for the past 20 years the cooperative has been organising homestay activities involving 17 houses with downstream activities based on culture and environmental conservation.

"We have been very fortunate because our village is surrounded by forest reserves, nature and wildlife. These are the main attractions that made our village popular with the tourists, especially those from overseas.

"So to maintain this success (the best tourism village award), we will continue to improve and do more conservation work like protecting the forest," he said to reporters recently.

Kampung Batu Puteh, which operates community tourism activities under Kopel, received the award from the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) in Madrid, Spain, last December, beating 44 other villages across the globe. Abd Sanih said he was confident of winning the award as the community puts a lot of effort in turning the area into a top tourism destination.

According to him, apart from

experiencing a kampung lifestyle, tourists are also exposed to educational programmes and environmental awareness when they holiday here, through the Sungai Kinabatangan cruise and jungle trekking.

"We offer training to other homestay operators who are interested in running eco-tourism business too," he added.

Tourism, Arts and Culture secretary-general Datuk Dr Noor Zari Hamat who visited the village recently commended the coaching and mentoring efforts carried out by the community of Kampung Batu Puteh to other industry players.

"The ministry always encourages such efforts (guidance and mentoring) so that the homestay industry can move as a mutually supportive entity to produce a strategic and visionary homestay industry, and thus help the country's tourism industry," he said.

Noor Zari said the ministry would provide cooperation and assistance with homestay operators nationwide to help them be well-organised and run their companies systematically.

"The ministry's cooperation with homestay operators include assistance in human capital development, the promotion of certain programmes and infrastructure upgrade in the area," he said. — Bernama



Kampung Batu Puteh, located along the Kinabatangan river in Sabah, received the best tourism village from UNWTO last year. — Fillepic