

# Green conference closing ceremony held in nature park

BY ELMER YEO

**KUCHING** : The Best of Both Worlds Conference (BOBW) with the theme 'effective environmental education for biodiversity conservation' was closed officially at the Sama Jaya Nature Reserve near Tabuan Jaya here on Tuesday.

The one and a half day international conference organised by FRIM (Forest Research Institute Malaysia) in collaboration with Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC) was held at the Kuching Hilton Hotel which commenced on Monday and entered its final day yesterday.

Instead of holding the closing ceremony at the Kuching Hilton Hotel, more than 100 participants and presenters from South Africa, Scotland, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia were treated to a unique closing ceremony that was conducted in a fresh, cool open space and around the natural greenery situated at the heart of the city.

Dr Noor Azlin Yahya, the head of the eco-tourism and urban forestry management of FRIM officiated the ceremony on behalf of Datu Haji Len Talif Salleh, the Director of Forests and Managing Director of SFC.

In her speech, Azlin said that the concept of the conference which discussed issues such as the challenges of forests and natural resources conservation as a result of urbanisation are very relevant given the fact that cities and countries all over the world are experiencing alarming and rapid growth in population and development



**CONFERENCE** participants posing for a group photo after the closing ceremony. PHOTO: JOHN CHAN

which leads to destruction of nature within the city areas.

'The annual urbanisation rate in Malaysia is 3.9 percent with Cambodia at 6.2 percent, Laos with 6.1 percent and Singapore at 1.0 percent'

'In Malaysia circa 1980, 35 percent of the population lived in urban areas and by 1995, 55 percent of Malaysians stayed in cities and towns. Today, we have 60 percent of population in the cities'

commented Azlin.

Azlin explained that natural resources are vital in balancing the density and distribution of the population and added that environmental education can assist the public to realise the importance of conservation and their awareness as well as responsibilities in protecting the precious existing resources in the city.

The participants would be visiting the Semengoh Nature

Reserve on the following day to gain first hand experience. They would tour the Orangutan Conservation Programme and Orchid Conservation besides making a trip to other places of interest like the pottery factories located along Jalan Penrissen, Cat Museum and Kampung Gersik.

The first BOBW conference was held in South Africa back in 1998 with the aim of promoting awareness and providing a plat-

form for participants from around the world to meet and discuss on ways and techniques to preserve nature apart from evaluation of the methods implemented for assessment on the effectiveness of the programmes involved.

Also present at the ceremony were Professor Dr Callie Loubser from the University of South Africa, Professor Dr Peter Higgins from the University of Edinburgh and Victor Luna Amin from SFC.