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Lecture on palm trees at Sarawak Biodiversity Centre

KUCHING: The Sarawak Biodiversity Center (SBC) here organised a public awareness talk by Dr. Saw Leng Guan on the 46 species of the Licuala palm tree that are endemic to Borneo, yesterday.

Out of the 46 species, 26 were newly discovered in Borneo which has the highest density of the palm species. Papua New Guinea was second with about 24 species of the wild palms.

Dr. Saw said Borneo has the potential for palm tree plantation. More species are yet to be discovered and the research papers on the palm will provide more information on the palm's importance to human being.

The most common palm tree planted was Sago palm, one of the 12 genera of the palm sub-family Calamoideae.

"It was the main food source of the Penan initially. The whole stem is rich in starch and the palm trees are abundant along the coastal and muddy areas," Dr Saw said.

According to Dr. Saw, the other palm crop easily found nowadays is the coconut tree which abounds the South East Asia. The wild coconut palm tree does not seem to exist anymore.

He said 57 per cent of all the known palm species are threatened unless steps are taken to prevent their extinction which will have a great impact on the eco- system of Borneo in the long run.

The speaker, Dr. Saw was the Director of the Forest Biodiversity Division at the

Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM). He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Forestry in 1981 from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and did his master's degree and PhD at the University of Reading in the early 1990s.

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DR. SAW LENG GUAN



DR. Saw Leng Guan giving a lecture on the Licuala palm tree at the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre yesterday.