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28 million trees planted nationwide since 2010

KUCHING: More than 28 million trees have been planted under the nationwide tree-planting campaign, surpassing the initial target of 26 million expected by the year 2014.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Douglas Uggah Embas said yesterday that the campaign started in June 2010.

The 26 million trees represent the country's estimated 26 million population, targeting a 1:1 tree to citizen ratio.

Some 200,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide was expected to be absorbed once the trees had been planted.

"More initiatives can be carried out to encourage planting of more suitable local indigenous species, instead of depending on landscape or ornamental plants in urban areas.

"This is because urban forests and parks need to be managed just like natural forests since they too are our valuable heritage," said Uggah when opening the Urban Forestry Conference 2012 themed "Forests and Parks: Communicating Messages of Sustainability."

The conference is jointly organised by the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), Kuching North City Hall and Sarawak Forestry Corporation.

Uggah's speech was read by the

ministry's deputy secretary-general, Datuk Dr Mohd Ali Mohamad Nor.

Uggah said greening the cities and other urban centres was also in keeping with the promise Malaysia made at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro that 50 per cent of the country would be covered by forests.

Uggah said the "green lung" of the cities and major urban centres green lungs would cover "at least 10 per cent" of its total area.

"These urban forests, recreational parks, playgrounds, car parks, open spaces and roadsides would be planted with a variety of species of trees, both valuable and ornamental."

He said FRIM was identifying the species of trees which were appropriate for planting in urban areas.

"FRIM would have a special meeting soon with local governments on this."

Uggah said green lungs and urban forests were important

in creating a conducive environment in urban living.

"We must avoid becoming like other cities in the world that are experiencing 'environmental problems' like rising urban temperatures and increasing urban hot spots that invariably led to other environmental problems like poor air quality and floods.

"More initiatives can be carried out to encourage planting of more suitable local indigenous species, instead of depending on landscape or ornamental plants in urban areas."

Datuk Seri Douglas Uggah Embas