

# Sabah Celebrates World Water Day 2018

reported by



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Day 2018.



Source: image is from [www.worldwaterday.org](http://www.worldwaterday.org)

On 22 March every year, the world celebrates World Water Day, bringing attention to the importance of water in our lives. This year, the theme for World Water Day is “Nature for Water”, focusing on nature-based solutions (NBS) to the water challenges we face today.

The campaign slogan, “The answer is in nature”, further raises the awareness of NBS. The core message is that NBS – such as forest rehabilitation through replanting, reconnecting rivers for floodplains and restoring wetlands – is a sustainable and cost-effective way to rebalance the water cycle and to mitigate the effects of climate change, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of life.

The application of NBS will steer our development direction to create a “green infrastructure” to meet the water needs of an ever-growing population, the need to contribute

to a circular economy, to protect the environment and reduce pollution and to secure sustainable management of water and sanitation.

The relation between NBS and Sustainable Development lies in the proper management of water supply and quality support to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. The application of NBS can play an essential role in the following aspects:

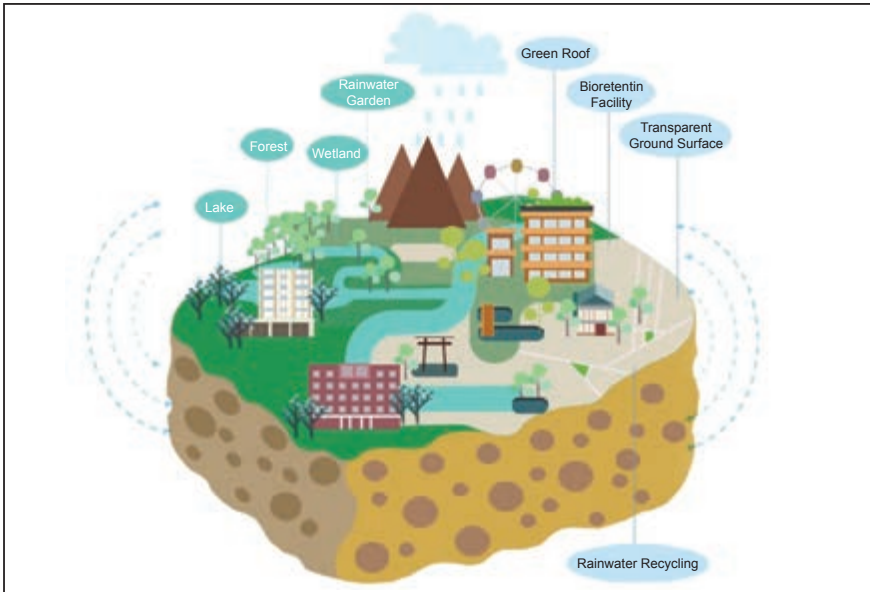
- **Minimise poverty, hunger and improve health condition.** New jobs are often created by NBS and improved health from better quality water means higher productivity.
- **Affordable, clean energy, industry innovation and infrastructure, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production.** NBS

requires little or no energy, so it can reduce reliance on energy hungry grey systems. NBS also helps provide more sustainable water resources to serve growing settlements.

- **Improving life below water and on land.** Wetlands can reduce pollution through filtration as well as increase biodiversity by expanding natural habitats.

Some examples of NBS include Sand Dams, Landscape Restoration, Conservation Agriculture and the creation of Sponge Cities.

A Sponge City is a new urban drainage infrastructure building paradigm made popular in China in recent years. It has the capacity to mainstream urban water management into urban planning policies and designs. It should have the appropriate planning, legal frameworks and tools in place



A Sponge City has an urban underground water system that operates like a sponge to absorb, store, leak and purify rainwater as well as release it for use when necessary



Keynote Address by Datuk Ir. Hj. Yahiya Ag. Kahar, Director of Department of Irrigation and Drainage Sabah

to implement, maintain and adapt the infrastructure systems to collect, store and treat (excess) rainwater. A Sponge City will not only be able to deal with rainwater but will also reuse rainwater to help mitigate the impacts of urban flooding, heat island effects and water pollution.

This year, Sabah hosted the World Water Day Conference & Exhibition on 21-22 March. The event, attended by some 350 participants, was launched on 21 March at The Magellan Sutera Resort. There were 4 sessions and an optional site visit, with 20 invited speakers consisting of 4 international speakers from 3 countries, policy/implementers and practitioners who are specialised in their respective field. Sabah World Water Day was held with the aim of bringing greater awareness to the public on the possibility of using nature to overcome the water challenges of the 21st century.

Among the topics discussed were Policy & Management which includes ways to strengthen water governance in the country with emphasis on decentralised arrangements for the management of water and other natural resources.

The event was co-organised by the Department of Irrigation & Drainage Sabah and The Institution of Engineers Malaysia (Sabah Branch) and was supported by the Sabah Public Works Department and Sabah State Water Department. ■



Participants at the conference



Speakers for The Conference