



MILESTONE: Penguang (second right) presents a memento to Wong. Also seen are state environment director Ismail Ithnin (right) and Ministry of Environment and Public Health permanent secretary Ganie Ugay. — Photo by Johnathan Bullet

# NREB's environ database system first in region

By Zora Chan

**KUCHING:** The Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB) yesterday launched its GeoEnviron Database System (GE)—the first and only inter-agency common environmental database management in Southeast Asia.

Environment and Public Health Minister Dato Sri Wong Soon Koh, who officiated at the launching, said GE would definitely boost environmental protection and management, which formed an important part of the state's development agenda.

"The GE will be an effective planning tool for the state regional development corridor, Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (Score), to ensure that the development will conform to local and international requirements," he said.

Wong, who is also Second Finance Minister, said among others, the system is able to model environmental performance by taking into consideration past, current and future development activities, to project or predict future

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environmental conditions.

"Having this information, the state government will be able to plan development activities to avoid serious environmental degradation and opt for the best development scheme for better environmental management performance," he said.

Wong explained that GE allowed environmental data to be acquired immediately as the system is always online and, therefore, there would be no hiccups in data flow between agencies.

NREB controller Dr Penguang Manggil added the system was server-based, allowing different user agencies to be connected to a centralised data bank with the board as the 'host' or 'lead' agency.

"As a Relational Database Management System, it is currently linked to 13 state

agencies and the federal Department of Environment," said Penguang.

He said GE could be used to interpret and analyse a wide range of environmental data such as recipient and ambient environmental quality like water quality, water intake points, soil borehole and air quality for rivers and water catchment areas; pollution sources like landfills, industries, food outlets, livestock, sewage treatment plants and plantations; as well as environmental approval and case management including environmental impact assessment, open burning applications, complaints and enforcement.

He said it could also generate environmental status or performance and hence be used as a very

useful decision-making tool for holistic environmental planning and management approaches.

"This system, when fully integrated with the Geospatial database, is capable of direct communication with the Geographic Information System (GIS) application," said Penguang.

He added that GE had been running for about a year and since then, had made progress in capacity building of users, data updating, case management and reporting.

He thanked the state government for approving RM1.8 million to kick-start the implementation of the system statewide over a period of two years — from the middle of last year to the middle of next year.

"The GE, being the first and only inter-agency common environmental database management system in Malaysia as well as in SEA, is a major step forward in enhancing our environmental database, in line with the modernisation and globalisation processes and the advancement in ICT," he said.