

Utan sculpture set to be Sandakan iconic landmark

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SANDAKAN: The Utan sculpture at Harbour Square here is set to be Sandakan's iconic tourism landmark.

The sculpture, commissioned following a nationwide design competition last year, was unveiled during the 50th anniversary celebration of Sabah's independence.

The Sandakan Sculpture competition 2012 was jointly organised by Ireka Development Management Sdn Bhd and Sandakan Harbour Square developers – ICSD Ventures Sdn Bhd and Sandakan Municipal Council.

All the 61 competition entries are being exhibited at Harbour Mall Sandakan from June 28 until July 7.

Michael Kwa Wei Choon's winning design titled "Utan" won him first prize and a RM18,000 cash reward.

The design was inspired by Sandakan's world renowned orang utan.

Daniel Tiong Wei Wen won the second prize with his 'Mountain in Coils' design and took home a RM5,000 prize money while third prize winner Husna Adlyna Binti Sidek won herself RM3,000 with design titled 'The Tree'.

"My sculpture symbolises Sandakan as a famous eco-tourism destination in South East Asia. The abstract geometric form personifies an 'orang utan' on all fours, with the recessed curve representing the primate's face," shared Michael Kwa, an art lecturer from an international school in Kuala Lumpur.

Michael joined Sandakan Municipal Council president Datuk Ir James Wong and ICSD Ventures' Lai Voon Hon as they unveiled the larger-than-life sculpture at Sandakan Harbour Square yesterday.

"The judges like the cutting edge design as it denotes Sandakan's fast progression to becoming a vibrant nature city.

"The contemporary interpretation of 'orang utan' is also very unique and most importantly, it takes into consideration factors such as relevance and practicality," said Lai who is also the president and CEO of Ireka Development.

The entries were judged on originality and creativity – relevance to the site and to Sandakan, visual impact to the public and long-term main-

tenance.

The panel of judges included James Lai, former Sandakan MP Datuk Lau Ngan Siew, member of Sabah Tourism Board of Directors Datuk John Lim, Sabah Forestry Department's Primus Kasun, director of ADC Akitek Chris Low Ing Ming and CEO of JGP Architect-Singapore-cum-artist/ sculptor Tommy Chen.

Standing majestically facing the coastal shore of Sandakan Bay, the sculpture is adjacent to the Four Points by Sheraton Sandakan (FPSS) and Harbour Mall Sandakan (HMS).

Some eco-tourism attractions in Sandakan include the Sepilok Orang Utan Sanctuary, Sun Bear Sanctuary, Labuk Bay Proboscis Monkey Sanctuary, Turtle Islands Park, Kinabatangan River and Gomantong Caves.

Meanwhile, James said the unveiling of the Utan sculpture is timely as the Harbour Square needs a matching monument to go with.



Wong (second right) takes a closer look at the iconic sculpture