

Awards for keen, green youth

IN AN effort to develop tomorrow's ambassadors for the environment, more youth here are getting up close and personal with nature.

Since January, 299 students from 23 primary and secondary schools have embarked on a wide range of projects – both at school and at home – to deepen their understanding of nature.

Next month, 30 students from schools such as Raffles Institution, NUS High and Cedar Girls' Secondary, will embark on a four-day field trip to Pulau Tioman in Malaysia, where they will interact with scientists and naturalists to learn more about the habitat.

They are recipients of awards given out under the Nature Explorers' Programme, which empowers youth from Primary 4 to first-year junior college to cultivate a curiosity for the study of science.

At a ceremony held at the National University of Singapore (NUS) yester-

day, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Yaacob Ibrahim presented the students with their certificates. Organised by the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research (RMBR) at NUS, the programme provides students with the opportunity to assess how flora and fauna thrive here and in the region.

RMBR director Peter Ng said: "The way to save our biodiversity is not through laws, dictates or even incentives... It is through education."

Petrochemical giant ExxonMobil Asia Pacific and the West Zone Centre of Excellence for Science and Technology are sponsoring the trips.

Dr Yaacob said the programme highlighted the importance of youth here learning about the impact of the environment on biodiversity. Such programmes could be scaled up over the long term to become part of the education curriculum, he added.

AMRESH GUNASINGHAM