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Layut Tugalan,  
village head of  
Kg Limbuak Darat, Banggi.



By ANNA VIVIENNE

## With the Bonggi...

**T**he Bonggi, an ethnic Kadazan-Dusun subgroup, is concentrated in the Kudat area, with most of them living on Banggi Island off Kudat.

There are only about 3000 living in the main community in Banggi, according to village head Layut Tugalan (pictured), 53, from Kg Limbuak Darat, Banggi.

"Our community is mainly found in Banggi. This is where we have always lived, and we have no desire to live elsewhere. We are farmers, we usually plant cash crops such as tapioca and maize," he says.

"We are however still left behind in many aspects. Our standard of living is low and we need to have more avenues for economic gain. We hope the authorities concerned will look into our plight. We hope that they will come to us and teach us what to do or maybe show us more feasible farming techniques," he adds.

A wish for a better life however does not mean compromising their culture.

"Not having better farming implements will not affect our culture and tradition in any way. I don't see any reason why I should live in a concrete house when my wooden house serves me very well. We still live in traditional Bonggi houses. The one at the State Museum is a fair imitation although there is some room for improvements."

On whether Banggi and the Bonggi's lifestyle can be promoted as tourism products, he answers, "Yes!"



"I believe that our culture is interesting to outsiders. We have our own dances and songs that we can share with tourists. We have our own folktales... our houses are still built in the old ways. We still use resins as torches and we sometimes use the 'fire sticks' for matches... Yes, we definitely have interesting products to show our guests."

"We hope that the authorities will help us and teach us how to conduct homestays. I think this is a good idea for us to earn a little bit of money," he adds.

On their participation in the State level Harvest Festival Celebrations, he says that only ten of them were invited to come to participate in the celebration.

"We only came with a few handicrafts, a set of musical instruments, and a small group of dancers. Next time, we will bring more to show the celebrants. But I am thankful because this is a good start for us to show visitors what we have to offer," he says.

Foreign guests will find the Bonggi interesting. Their culture and traditions are not very exposed and it will be appealing to discover how they live, think and behave daily. I found that they are not only sincere but also candid in portraying their desires.

The tourism authority may be interested to look up Layut's suggestion for a homestay programme to be established in their village.

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