

of islanders who depend on them. Recalling that some 600 million island-dwellers, represent-

ers, Mr Dan said biodiversity-based industries, such as tourism and fisheries, account

It is with these challenges in mind that much hope is being pinned on the process to define

made local, national and regional commitments to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity.

# Biodiversity celebrated at Independence House

Local conservation groups have united in educating and raising public awareness to the plight of our fragile ecosystems, while the botanical gardens inaugurate a garden – made up of invasive plants.

The official celebration of the international day was held at Independence House yesterday. This year's theme is "Island Biodiversity", with the aim of raising awareness to the fragile ecosystem and the plight of endemic species of flora and fauna.

The event was however dominated by a controversy. The inauguration of the "Thai Garden" project at the Botanical garden on the same day was the subject of much off the record speculation. "Isn't biodiversity about protecting our endemic species of plants and animals?" an official asked this newspaper.

Speaking to TODAY, Ronley Fanchette, Director for Conservation in the Wildlife, Trade and Conservation Section (WTC) at the ministry of Environment and Energy said that they have partnered with other Non-Governmental Or-



Mr Pothin-educating school children to the importance of protecting endemic wildlife.

ganisations (NGO) and conservation groups for yesterday's event "as we are all involved in education. We aim to create more awareness - especially among our schoolchildren, given that they are the future custodians of our country."

A stand that was being

manned by conservation officer Ashley Pothin, proved to be very popular among school children. It featured an array of specimens that were made up of invasive as well as endemic animals and insects. "The idea is to educate people with regards to invasive and foreign species and the

threat they pose vis a vis our endemic animals such as the introduced terrapins and parrots who compete for food and territory with our own" said Mr Pothin after being visited by an inquisitive batch of primary school students.

"Wise Oceans", a UK registered society which prides itself in marine conservation was also present with a colourful stand depicting marine life and the breath-taking sights that can be found right here in Seychelles. "We have been working in partnership with Four Seasons Resort for the past two years", said Lindsey Sullivan from Wise Oceans. He added that the hotel guests "find it very positive that we are conserving while helping to educate them on the importance of oceanic biodiversity. We have had some great feedback and we would love to expand to other resorts".