



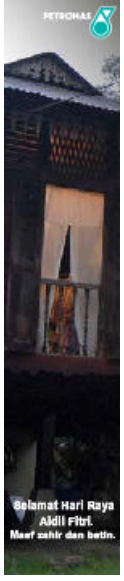
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New programme allows locals and foreigners to adopt sea turtles



KUCHING: 'Adopt A Sea Turtle' is a wildlife conservation programme in Sarawak that gives locals and foreigners a chance to experience turtle conservation activities at the turtle island of Pulau Talang Talang Besar near here.

According to the latest issue of Perkasa, the Sarawak Timber Industry Corporation's bimonthly newsletter, the participants would be able to see the positive progress, including tagging and measuring of turtles, beach patrolling, transferring of eggs to hatchery, releasing of hatchlings, data recording as well as assisting in other researches and education.

"As one of the state's extensive efforts in wildlife protection, the turtle adoption programme is also a way of incorporating and involving locals and foreigners to value and celebrate what Sarawak has done thus far in sea turtle conservation," it said.

Launched on April 30 this year, the four day - three night programme is being conducted from May to September annually at the island, which is part of the Talang Salang National Park.

So far, eight species have been found at the national park, where 99 percent of nesting sea turtles recorded in Sarawak are of the Green Turtle species.

Following the listing of all sea turtles under the totally protected species list in the Wildlife Protection Ordinance, 1993 (Amended 2003), a proposal was made to the state government to gazette sea grass beds and coral reefs at the Kuala Lawas area, which had been identified as feeding ground for green and hawksbill turtle as totally protected area.

Perkasa said other conservation efforts included the Reef Ball project, which was found to be successful in reducing the number of sea turtle mortality rate and ensuring its netting areas are further protected besides benefiting the local fishermen by contributing significant increase in their catches.

However, another 5,000 reef balls are still needed to protect the sea turtles' critical habitat, their swimming areas, nesting beaches and feeding ground and migration pathway along the 1,000km coastline of Sarawak.

"This is where other conservation orientated organisations and the private sector can play their role and show support," it said.

Legislation pertaining to sea turtles in Sarawak are also in place and have been regularly revised to suit the current needs in managing sea turtle research and conservation. ©Bernama.

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