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Sabah islanders continue coral-planting mission

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KOTA KINABALU: Islanders have planted over 12,500 corals off Sabah's east coast district of Semporna.

The corals were planted at Selakan, Mabul, Kulapuan and Larapan, which are among the islands popular for scuba diving, since June last year.

The latest mission was carried out at Selakan Island from Jan 26 to 31.

A joint effort between state government, non-governmental organisations and the local community, the project achieved a significant milestone with the placement of 505 reef stars - steel structures that act as a base for coral fragments to grow.

Selakan Marine Conservation



Giving nature a hand:

Islanders carrying out conservation efforts in the seas off Selakan Island. - Photo courtesy of Reef Check Malaysia

Group representative Mulsedi Abdul Hadi said they had planted more than 7,500 corals at his home island of Selakan.

Reef Check Malaysia pro-

gramme manager Adzmin Fatta said the heightened awareness among local youths on the importance of coral reefs had ignited a passion to protect their

islands, with some taking the lead in deterring illegal fishing there.

"Some others help to address waste management issues, particularly youths from Larapan Marine Conservation Group, which has collected 7,000kg of waste on their island," he said yesterday.

He said these initiatives, when they continue to flourish, would contribute to the preservation of the environment of Semporna, which is located at the heart of the Coral Triangle and hosts the highest concentration of Malaysia's coral reefs.

"The commitment and action of these empowered island communities are building a sustainable future for the marine ecosystem, ensuring its vitality for generations to come," he added.

Despite its ecological significance, Adzmin said Semporna's coral reefs are facing challenges stemming from marine pollution, coastal development as well as unsustainable fishing practices and tourism.

He said the organisation had trained local youths to equip them with skills to conduct citizen science coral reef monitoring and various coral reef restoration techniques.

Semporna district officer Alexander Liew was full of praise for the efforts of the islanders.

"Coral reefs are the livelihood and treasure of Semporna, serving as the main attraction for tourism and fisheries.

"I am devoted to support this to ensure the continuous protection of our coral reefs and I hope more people will join in," he said.