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Saturday, 21 January 2017

Mangrove preservation success



A file image of volunteers from local communities planting some of the 5,000 mangrove saplings at the planting site in the Teluk Rubiah Forest Reserve.

THE FRIENDS of Kuala Gula Mangrove organisation, or Sahabat Hutan Bakau Kuala Gula (SHBKG), commemorated its 10th anniversary by planting 5,000 mangrove saplings at 3ha of degraded land in Teluk Rubiah Forest Reserve last Saturday.

The event, which saw the participation of 200 volunteers from local communities, schools, government agencies and the private sector, was officiated by Bagan Serai MP Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali.

Noor Azmi said the mangrove conservation and rehabilitation activities implemented by SHBKG parallel federal and state initiatives and are a part of the National Blue Ocean Strategy.

He congratulated the group on its successes.

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need for the involvement of local communities in mangrove rehabilitation.

“Starting with a group of 40 members in 2006, SHBKG became a part of the Kuala Gula Mangrove conservation and rehabilitation programme.

“Ten years on, the group has an additional 20 volunteers and achieved tremendous success. Since its establishment, they have replanted a total of 120,398 mangrove saplings covering approximately 90ha of the degraded mangrove area. Annually the group raises about 30,000 mangrove seedlings in their nursery, monitors and patrols the mangrove area to prevent encroachment and illegal activities, participates in public events and conferences to disseminate and exchange information on mangrove issues at local to national level,” said GEC Director Faizal Parish.

He said April 2014 marked the pinnacle of the group’s achievements when the state Forestry Department gazetted 1,502ha of Kuala Gula Mangrove as the Teluk Rubiah Forest Reserve.

“This proves a point that community involvement plays a pivotal role in the success and sustainability of mangrove forest conservation and rehabilitation project,” he said.

SHBKG Chairman Puji Astuti said this milestone proves that they are committed to protecting the Teluk Rubiah Forest Reserve.

“We would like to thank GEC and the Perak State Forestry Department for the success that SHBKG has achieved in the past 10 years,” she said.

The Kuala Gula Mangrove area is an important fishery are which supports the livelihoods of many in nearby communities.

It is also one of 10 eco-tourism areas in Perak and is designated as a bird sanctuary and Important Bird Area (IBA) with the IBA code MY05 Matang Coast.

Its mudflats and swampy areas are perfect stopovers and feeding place for various species of migratory and resident birds.

Threats such as the unsustainable construction of aquaculture farms, illegal harvesting of mangrove trees, encroachment, coastal erosion caused by increasing river traffic and its ecosystem have adversely effected local communities dependent on the natural sources provided by the area.

The conservation and rehabilitation efforts for the Kuala Gula mangrove area are currently focusing on strengthening the SHBKG network, establishing and promoting community initiatives in non-timber forest products in addition to raising mangrove seedlings and replanting mangrove saplings, patrolling and monitoring, and raising awareness.

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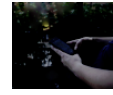
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