EXPEDITION PROFILE

September 29, 2018

30 volunteer divers from Malaysia and Singapore participated in the Helping Hands Dive @ Redang II, a collaboration between Laguna Redang Island Resort, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) and International SeaKeepers Society, Asia to protect the coral reefs on Redang Island, Terengganu, Malaysia.

The mission was to move 200 coral nubbins to a sheltered area at Pasir Akar within the Redang island Marine Park from the Laguna Redang Island Resort coral nursery. This coral nursery was setup as part of a two-year rehabilitation program by Laguna Redang Island Resort, led by UMT 's Dr. James Tan, to restore the degraded reef in selected areas of Redang Island. The first phase in the rehabilitation programme commenced in March this year with a coral rescue operation and the setting up of the Laguna Redang Island Resort coral nursery in the open sea. The rescue actions involved planting broken coral nubbins on bases and securing them in specially designed frames within the coral nursery in order to provide a stable substrate to encourage survival. Since then with regular monitoring and under the watchful eye of the resort's Marine Research Officer, the 200 coral nubbins have experienced a high survival rate of 90.3% % with growth rates measuring 0.1 cm per week.

Dr. James Tan commented, "Our programme goal is to use the healthy growing coral nubbins in transplantations to assist in enhancing reef recovery. This is timed to take place in the first quarter of next year and as we approach the monsoon season, our priority now is to ensure that the coral nubbins can survive despite the sea conditions and are protected during the monsoon season."

To do just that, the Resort's engineering team have fabricated specially designed support frames for the coral nubbins to be placed in a safe zone within the Redang Island Marine Park.

General Manager of Laguna Redang Island Resort, Mr. Peter Cheng shared, "UMT have been our conservation partners since our Resort's opening. On our part we make our infrastructure and resources within the Resort available to them as we understand that sustainable tourism is important for Redang island."

Director of Operations & Programs for The International SeaKeepers Society, Asia, Ms. Gail Tay added, "We are very pleased to be part of the Laguna Redang Island Resort's coral transplant programme and to help create awareness for marine conservation and the health of our oceans. This coral transplant mission provides the perfect opportunity to involve the community to contribute towards restoration whilst learning more about the marine environment.

To further create awareness and deeper understanding of the state of our marine environment, the participating UMT researchers conducted a series of public talks that centered on marine conservation ranging from tips to the participating volunteer divers on how to practice citizen science when diving; to artificial coral reefs and its value and the need for regional data in marine research.

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