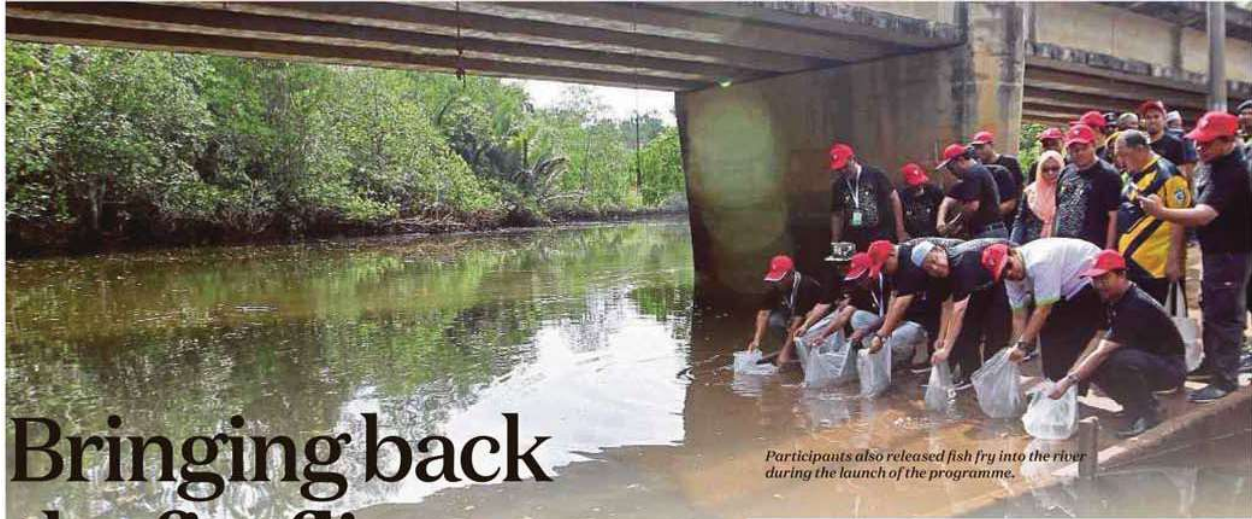


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Participants also released fish fry into the river during the launch of the programme.

Bringing back the fireflies

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TENAGA Nasional Berhad (TNB) has thrown its support behind efforts to revive the declining population of fireflies at the once popular Yak Yah Firefly Sanctuary near Kampung Ilok here.

A flood mitigation project several years ago to straighten Sungai Yak Yah, saw the mangrove apple (berembang) trees that serves as an important source of food and habitat for the fireflies being damaged and swept away by sea water.

TNB is helping to boost the Yak Yah Firefly Sanctuary so that it regains its popularity to lure tourists and help uplift the livelihood of villagers.

A one-day Community and Environment Sustainability Programme held at Kampung Yak Yah last Wednesday saw participants planting berembang trees, participating in gotong-royong to clean up Sungai Cukai, building a berembang seeding site and releasing fish fry into the river.

Terengganu Department of Environment director Ramli Abdul Rah-

man praised TNB's efforts saying the move will certainly provide a positive impact to the environment, ensure sustainability for the future and help the state's tourism sector grow.

He said a collaboration with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) to conduct studies on the fireflies along with TNB's presence will help to conserve the firefly population and its habitat.

TNB Research Sdn Bhd chief strategy officer Dr Mohd Fadzil Mohd Siam said the company hopes to emulate the success story of Kampung Kuantan in Kuala Selangor which is well known for its fireflies.

He said there are plans to bring some villagers from Kampung Yak Yah to Kampung Kuantan so that they can see and understand better the efforts done by TNB to help improve the socio-economic development of the area.

There were plans to provide a package tour to tourists, as there were many attractions nearby, including the Kemaman Mini Zoo.

"There are certainly a lot of opportunities to explore in this village and now TNB has started the ball rolling. I hope once the firefly population

grows, the villagers here will take the opportunity to venture into business including homestays and providing traditional snacks.

"Several youth movements have shown support towards TNB's efforts so we believe that they will continue the good effort to ensure the fireflies will become a main attraction. Boat operators can also bring tourists fishing and visitors will have more choices in terms of activities and places to visit when they come here," he said.

As part of the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme, they had also repaired and repainted a community hall in the village and provided assistance to the needy families.

Meanwhile, TNB researcher Aisah Md Shukur said based on the information gathered from the villagers, Kampung Yak Yah was once popular with fireflies but following efforts to straighten the river had resulted in sea water entering the area during high tide, which affected the mangrove forests.

"Now there is a drop in the fireflies population so we hope that following efforts to replant the berembang,



Terengganu Department of Environment director Ramli Abdul Rahman (centre) with TNB Research Sdn Bhd chief strategy officer Dr Mohd Fadzil Mohd Siam (second from left) and Kemaman assemblyman Che Alias Hamid (right) planting the berembang trees during the launch of the Community and Environment Sustainability Programme.

jejawi [Malayan banyan], pong pong [Cerbera odollam], nipah and putat trees today more fireflies will return and occupy the area.

Kampung Yak Yah Village Community Management Council (MPKK) chairman Yusof Mamat, 60, lauded TNB and hoped to see the return of the village to its glory days when it used to

receive visitors from Europe and Japan to see the fireflies.

"The villagers are prepared to join this mission to revive the fireflies population and it will also help the people here to generate some income," he said.

"We are grateful to TNB along with UKM who have brought their students here to help with the tree replanting activities. It is good that they are studying which trees are suitable for planting along the river to help attract the fireflies," said villager Hashim Abdullah, 50.

UKM student Farzana Azli, 22, said Kemaman was her third stop after having previously joined TNB's programme to plant berembang trees in Kampung Sungai Timun, Rembau, Negri Sembilan and Kampung Dew in Taiping, Perak.

The final-year Degree in Biology undergraduate said it was a good move by TNB to expose students from higher learning institutions on the environment and joining in efforts to preserve fireflies.

Advanced Technology Training Centre [Adtec] Kemaman student Nor Amirul Arif Johari, 24, said he and his friends were taught on the importance to preserve the fireflies and how vital the berembang trees were for the survival of the insects.

“This is a good move to expose students from higher learning institutions to the environment.”

FARZANA AZIL



“We at Adtec are honoured to be chosen to be part of this programme.”

NOR AMIRUL ARIF JOHARI



“There are many attractions nearby here and including the fireflies would allow more tourists to plan their visit here.”

YUSOF MAMAT



“With assistance from TNB, I believe we will be able to ensure the survival of the fireflies.”

HASHIM ABDULLAH

