

MARINE PARK

NST-2

Divers must get approval

8/8

MERSING: Sultan of Johor Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar has decreed that all scuba divers wishing to undertake diving activities at the Sultan Iskandar Marine Park must get approval and register themselves at the Mersing District Council here, besides having insurance coverage.

He said this was not only to ensure their safety, but also to protect the coral reefs in the marine park.

"(All scuba divers) must get approval... you cannot just come all the way from Singapore or anywhere else, and dive here," he said after gracing the Coral Restoration Programme and signing the *Malaysia Book of Records*' recognition for the largest Malaysia simultaneous coral reef plantation

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State govt to preserve park's ecosystem

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programme in Pulau Tinggi here yesterday.

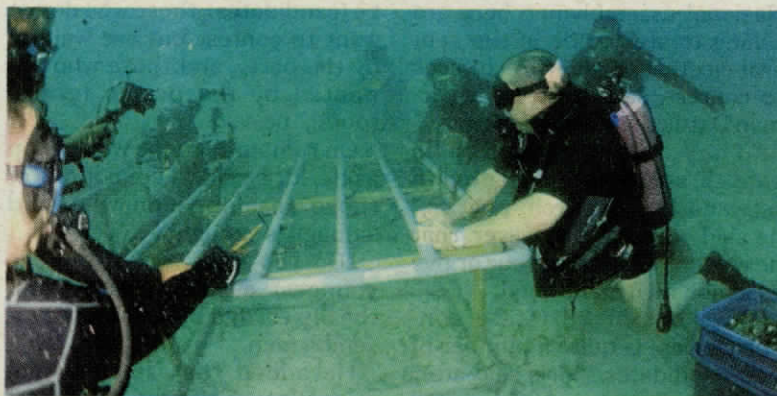
The programme, held in conjunction with the 10th anniversary of the Malaysian Marine Park Department (MMPD), saw the sultan joining 42 scuba divers to plant 1,200 coral seeds on the underwater PVC frame in Pulau Mentinggi, which is part of Pulau Tinggi.

Present were MMPD deputy director-general Ab Rahim Gor Yaman, state Health, Environment, Education and Information Committee chairman Datuk Ayub Rahmat, Mersing district officer Ashari Kasnan and Johor MMPD director Mohd Nizam Ismail.

Sultan Ibrahim said during the dive, he noticed that many coral reefs were damaged.

He said he would return to dive in Pulau Mentinggi in the next two years to check on the coral seeds planted yesterday.

Ayub said the state would adhere to the sultan's decree and



Sultan of Johor Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar planting coral seeds on the underwater PVC frame in Pulau Mentinggi yesterday. PIC BY MOHD AZREN JAMALUDIN

ensure that all scuba divers were registered and insured before undertaking activities at the marine park.

He said the state government would also ensure that the park's marine ecosystem, including coral reefs, was preserved and the area was not encroached by illegal fishermen.

"We will carry out enforcement with other agencies, including

the MMPD, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, Fisheries Department and the Johor National Park Corporation," he said, adding that TLSI was also a habitat for dugongs.

Thirteen islands off Mersing have been gazetted as part of TLSI. Eight other uninhabited islands in area were waiting to be gazetted in an effort to expand TLSI. **Bernama**