

# Protect our coral reefs

THE Malaysian peninsula is one of the richest sources of coral diversity. The vast archipelago holds an abundance of coral along with an array of marine flora and fauna that inhabit these coral lagoons.

However, these precious marine ornaments are in more than a spot of bother as their survival and subsequent propagation are threatened by mass bleaching in the last few years, giving them a bizarre look.

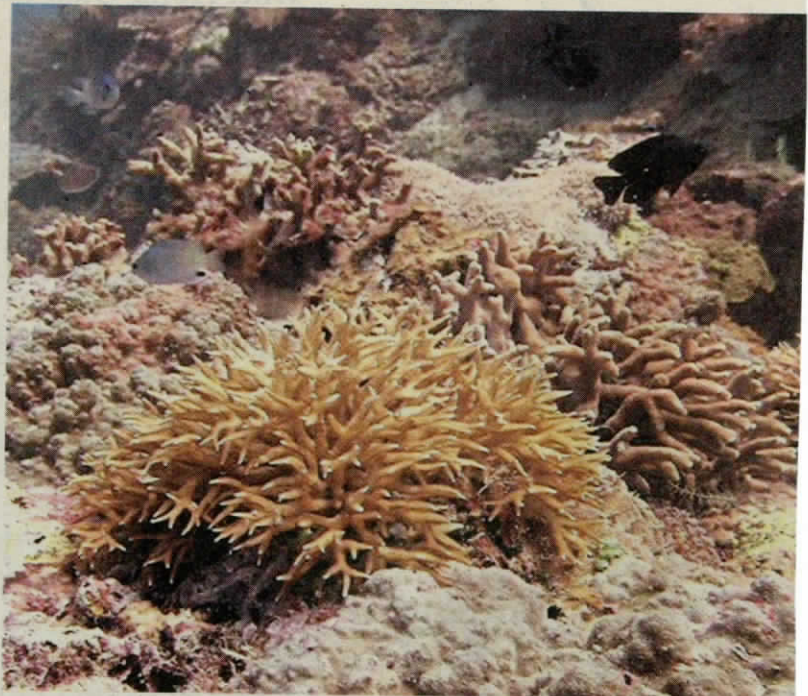
To make a sizeable impact on the overall protection of coral reefs, Malaysia must adopt a holistic approach which should be clearly defined in upcoming days.

I would like to mention Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tunku Jaafar, who admirably raised the alarm on the depletion of coral reefs by successive thermal stress when he received serious satellite data from the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Centre.

I must mention that so many studies have been carried out to assess the coral reef status in Peninsular Malaysia but to be honest the results are not still convincing.

The most recent survey (2013) emphasised that Malaysia's overall coral cover has been reduced from 49.96% to 48.33% in a span of four years.

In addition to that, reefs in Payar Island Marine Park (Kedah), in



Redang Island (Terengganu), Tioman Island Marine Park (Pahang), and in Aur Island Marine Park (Johor) are already under severe mass bleaching.

I would therefore suggest that human encroachment on corals should be strictly tackled in order to minimise the degradation of these beautiful creatures. Coral video transect, a very recent technique to depict the profile of coral depletion, should be implemented

more often than not.

Last but not the least, the public should be made aware of the significance of corals and more relevant studies and protection programmes should be designed in order to restrict the extinction of the precious coral gene pool.

**DR TAPASH RUDRA**  
 Department of Biotechnology  
 Faculty of Science  
 Lincoln University College