



KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

SURAT KHABAR	:	STAR METRO		
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THE Global Environment Centre (GEC) expressed its support for the recent proposal to nominate the Kuala Gula-Matang mangrove forests in Perak to be internationally recognised for its importance.

The proposal by environmentalists is for the mangrove forests in Kuala Sepetang, near Taiping, to be listed under "Eight Wetlands of International Importance" (Ramsar site).

The status is accorded under the Ramsar Convention, an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

GEC director Faizal Parish described the move as timely because over the recent years, the mangroves along the coastline had degraded with coastal erosion becoming a serious concern.

"Following the 2004 tsunami, the government has taken action to support mangrove protection and rehabilitation, and thus the effort must be recognised.

"The Kuala Gula-Matang mangrove forests are considered as one of the most productive wetland ecosystems in the country with well-established ecological, economic and cultural importance.

"The Matang mangrove is recognised internationally as one of the

Support for listing of eighth mangrove site

Kuala Gula-Matang mangrove forests proposed for inclusion under international wetlands treaty

best managed mangrove forests in the world for having a sustainable management plan for more than 100 years," he said in a statement issued last Tuesday.

Energy and Natural Resources Minister Datuk Seri Dr Shamsul Anuar Nasarahin in a statement issued on June 14 lauded the move on getting the mangrove forests site placed under the listing.

He said the proposal was subject to the state government's approval, and that the nomination of the Kuala Gula-Matang as a Ramsar site would not only boost the state economy but also bring in funds, from within and outside the country, to finance studies and experts on wetland conservation.

On this, Faizal said together with Yayasan Sime Darby (YSD) and Sahabat Hutan Bakau Kuala Gula

(SHBKKG), GEC welcomed the ministry's plans to work with Perak government to submit the nomination bid.

He said the Kuala Gula mangrove forest covering 400ha to the north of Matang, was previously badly degraded but since 2007, it had been properly cared for by SHBKKG.

"The group has achieved tremendous success in restoring the degraded mangrove area in Kuala Gula, and this just proves that community involvement plays a pivotal role in sustainability, conservation and rehabilitation," he added.

SHBKKG chairman Puji Astuti said from 2006 to 2020, more than 15,000 volunteers had taken part in planting 260,000 mangrove saplings in Kuala Gula, covering a

90ha area.

She said the group hoped that when the area is recognised as a Ramsar site, it would further boost ongoing conservation efforts.

"Kuala Gula is one of the top 10 ecotourism areas in Perak, and it is recognised as a bird sanctuary as well as an Important Bird Area (IBA).

"Hopefully this will enable our communities to enhance efforts to grow the ecotourism potential and help us generate income in the post-pandemic era," she added.

YSD chief executive officer Dr Yatela Zainal Abidin described the move to get the Kuala Gula-Matang mangrove forest listed as a Ramsar site as a significant milestone.

"We believe this will contribute immensely towards one of the foundation's objectives of strength-

ening the community under the SHBKKG network, establishing and promoting the local community's initiatives in producing non-timber forest products as well as raising mangrove seedlings and replanting saplings.

"This includes maintenance of mangrove saplings, patrolling and monitoring of the planted areas while instilling awareness on the importance of mangroves to address the climate change crisis," she added.

Dr Yatela said YSD's three-year partnership with GEC on a community-based mangrove conservation project that took off in February last year was aimed at strengthening sustainable management of mangrove and coastal resources as well as enhancing community engagement.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was signed on Feb 2, 1971 in Ramsar City, Iran, to ensure wetlands are preserved in moving towards sustainable development throughout the world.

Malaysia has been participating in the Ramsar Convention since 1994, with seven wetlands in the country accorded the status, namely Tasek Bera in Pahang, Kuching Wetlands National Park in Sarawak, Tanjung Piai and Pulau Kukup National Parks, as well as Sungai Pual Forest Reserve in Johor, Lower Kinabatangan-Segama, and Kota Kinabalu Wetlands in Sabah.