

PULAU TIOMAN GETS COASTAL CLEAN-UP

Volunteers of the Reef Rehabilitation programme plant new corals, clean up waste at beaches

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STAFF of Reef Check Malaysia (RCM) and Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) recently returned here, located 32km off Rompin, Pahang, to continue with efforts to protect the island's beaches and ocean floor.

Some 40 volunteers took part in the three-day Pulau Tioman Reef Rehabilitation programme, under the supervision of RCM's senior programme manager, Alvin Chelliah.

They were divided into two groups — the first took care of the sea, while the second, the land.

The group who dived into the sea focused on planting new corals to artificial frames and removed the harmful crown-of-thorns starfish and snails that had destroyed the corals.

The non-divers, meanwhile, carried out beach cleaning activities at other parts of the island.

The group constructed *rumah*

hijau (greenhouse), also known as the recycling centre, at Kampung Air Batang to segregate and collect the recyclable items, before being transported to the mainland.

This was RBC's fifth year returning to the island for the project.

Its human resources department head, S. Manindra, was delighted to see that their efforts were bearing fruit.

"As we walked, we spotted recycling bins properly placed and people were more aware of the importance of recycling rather than simply throwing unwanted items away.

"Our divers also went into the sea to cull the crown-of-thorns and replanted the corals to rehabilitate them," he told the *New Straits Times*, which also joined in the programme.

Meanwhile, Alvin lauded the commitment shown by RBC in the programme.

"It is rare for corporate companies to come to the same place for five years. They are here to ensure the continuity of the good work started in 2015.

"We have also constructed *rumah hijau* at other places upon request by locals who wanted a similar facility as that in Kampung Air Batang.

"We reckon this shows how successful the programme has been and how well it has been accepted by locals."



A Royal Bank of Canada volunteer planting new corals during the Reef Rehabilitation Project at Pulau Tioman recently. PIC COURTESY OF ROYAL BANK OF CANADA