

CORAL reefs are among the most biodiverse and valuable ecosystems on our planet, providing a habitat for countless marine species and contributing significantly to the local economy through tourism.

In recent years, however, these delicate ecosystems have faced unprecedented challenges due to climate change, pollution and destructive human activities.

Recognising the importance of coral reefs and the need for their conservation, Reef Check Malaysia (RCM) has taken a proactive step in rehabilitating coral reefs around Redang Island.

Through its innovative coral rehabilitation programme, in collaboration with various stakeholders, RCM aims to preserve both the natural beauty of the area and its tourism appeal.

"The objective of the coral rehabilitation project is to conserve marine biodiversity through sustainable, community-based coral reef rehabilitation," said Cintai Redang programme manager Putri Asma.

THE CORAL REHABILITATION MOVE

The Cintai Redang team, under the auspices of RCM, has joined hands with the Fisheries Department, Laguna Dive Centre, Tioman Marine Conservation Group (TMCG), and Coralku Conservation to execute the coral rehabilitation project.

This collective effort signifies a significant partnership between environmental organisations and the local community to safeguard the marine environment that sus-

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tains their livelihoods.

At the heart of the coral rehabilitation initiative is the Redang Marine Conservation Group (RMCG), a group of local youths who are passionate about marine conservation.

Drawing inspiration from the successful experiences of the TMCG, RMCG is dedicated to revitalising coral reefs and learning from the knowledge-sharing sessions. This collaborative approach highlights the importance of inter-community cooperation, where valuable insights and best practices are exchanged for the greater good.

USE OF VARIOUS TECHNIQUES

One of the cornerstones of the coral rehabilitation programme is the use of different methods and techniques to ensure the highest survival rates for rescued corals.

The use of coated metal frames, cement blocks and coral clips has been tested, showcasing a commitment to finding the most effective restoration approach. This rigorous experimentation, combined with the planting of approximately 100 coral fragments per site, has contributed to the preservation of over 300 coral fragments.

Scheduled monitoring, carried out in cooperation with local community members and marine biologists, guarantees that these transplants have

the best chance of thriving in their new habitat.

The rehabilitation effort extends beyond coral planting. The teams have undertaken the crucial task of removing ghost nets from the marine environment. These abandoned fishing nets pose a significant threat to marine life, often entangling corals and marine animals, thereby damaging the reef ecosystem. By removing about 50kg of ghost nets from Redang Island's waters, the teams have demonstrated their commitment to holistic conservation.

CORAL TOOLKIT

An exciting development arising from the coral rehabilitation programme is the creation of a comprehensive coral rehabilitation toolkit. This toolkit will serve as a valuable resource for guiding effective coral restoration, particularly in community-based initiatives. By sharing the knowledge gained through practical experience, RCM aims to empower other conservation groups and communities to undertake similar projects, fostering a collective effort towards protecting our ocean's vital ecosystems.

As a testament to their dedication, RCM plans to publish a national toolkit by the end of 2024, encapsulating their findings and methodologies.



Divers use different methods and techniques to ensure the highest survival rates for rescued corals.

This resource will serve as a guide for future restoration projects, allowing others to benefit from their insights and successes.

The coral rehabilitation efforts on Redang Island underscores the importance of uniting communities, conservation organisations and local authori-

ties in the shared goal of preserving our environment.

By taking proactive measures to rehabilitate coral reefs, RCM and its partners are not only safeguarding the natural beauty of Redang Island but also ensuring its continued appeal as a premier tourism destination.

Reef Check Malaysia has taken a proactive step in rehabilitating coral reefs around Redang Island. PIX COURTESY OF REEF CHECK MALAYSIA

