

# Volunteers spruce up nature park

200 fishermen and varsity students work together to clean Kuala Selangor's green lung

story by  
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**REALISING** the importance of wetlands to a sustainable livelihood, the local community in Kuala Selangor got together to clean up Kuala Selangor Nature Park (KSNP).

Braving the heat and mud, some 200 volunteers comprising fishermen and university students cleaned up KSNP during the "Wetlands, We care" Jom Gotong Royong Perdana on a recent Sunday.

The massive clean-up was organised by the caretakers of the park, Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) and Kuala Selangor District Council (MDKS) in collaboration with Naza TTDI and Star Media Group.

The event was part of efforts to attain the Ramsar-certified wetland status.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is a treaty that protects wetlands and prevents development near such places.

MNS executive director and environmental education division head I.S. Shanmugaraj said the NGO was currently in the process of putting together paperwork for the proposal.

He said they expected to submit the proposal by end of the year but needed the necessary approvals from the council, state and Federal Government before they proceeded.

Apart from that, he said the event was organised to raise awareness among the local community on the importance of the mangrove

system for a sustainable future.

"The locals must be proud of the attractions and the mangroves they have in their community.

"The local council participation is equally important and we hope MDKS will inspire others to do the same," he added.

Shanmugaraj said the local council had started cleaning up the pathways two days before the event and provided the necessary logistics, too.

Participants gathered as early as 7.30am for the launch of the event

by MDKS president Noraini Roslan.

Noraini said their aim was skewed towards educating the community, especially the younger generation, on the importance of preservation of wetlands and its habitats.

"On a regional perspective, Kuala Selangor district is at the border of the Klang Valley that is developing rapidly.

"We need to balance that development with the preservation of greenery so that the districts in the Klang Valley can become the carbon sinks for whatever is produced by the more developed districts," she added.

MKDS, Noraini said, had decided to gazette at least 35% of the land as permanent forest reserve, especially the wetlands, due to geographical factors of the area.

She said they needed to retain water for agricultural purposes as well as the micro climate.

"Together with MNS, we have been able to educate the local community in areas they were unaware of.

"Before this, economic subsistence was important to them but they did not realise what they were doing now would have an impact in the future," she said.

Fortunately, she added, they had been working with the community along the coastal area and educating them.

Some of the people in the interior, known as the peatlands, have been trained to plant saplings so MDKS can buy those from them to replant areas that have been affected by fires.

In his speech, MNS vice-president Prof Dr Ahmad Ismail commended MDKS on its efforts.

He said he hoped other local authorities would emulate MDKS and support preservation works in the forests in their respective areas.

Dr Ahmad said it was also important for the media to help spread the word on such programmes to educate the general public.

After the launch, the volunteers filled their stomachs a little before heading off to carry out various tasks in groups.

The activities for the day included cleaning the mangrove areas, breaking down old structures, cleaning the pathways to make them more accessible as well as painting the road shoulders and other necessary amenities.

Nature lover Syahirah Aisyah Sufian, 23, from Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Gombak (UIA) was one of the dedicated workers at the nursery that day.

Having worked with MNS before, she said the event was a great way for modern people like her to go back to nature and enjoy it.

"I urged my friends to accept the invitation from MNS and spread the word to the others as well.

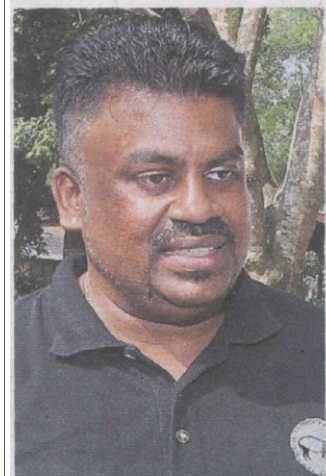
"I am also taking a course on environment and society so I can apply what I have learnt today in my coursework," she added.



Braving the heat and mud, some 200 volunteers made up of fishermen and university students cleaned up KSNP during the 'Wetland, We Care' Jom Gotong Royong Perdana.



Volunteers breaking down old facilities and cleaning up the pathways to make the area more accessible.  
 — Photos: KAMARUL ARIFFIN/The Star



Shanmugaraj says MNS is in the process of putting together paperwork to obtain Ramsar-certified wetland status for the park.



Students replanting and potting the saplings at the nursery.