

# Supporting nature and the people

RECOGNISING the importance of giving back to the community and contributing positively to the environment, Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad is not only committed to organising social welfare activities but also spreading conservation and environmental awareness across the nation.

Through its social responsibility arm, AMAL, the bank is involved in myriad initiatives to create brighter futures for communities through projects such as school adoption programmes, education workshops, community-building activities and the Projek Bantuan Rumah programme that provides homes for impoverished families.

AMAL's most recent event was Green Day 2016 that was held on May 20 and 21 in the small fishing town of Sematan, Sarawak, located 120km to the northwest of Kuching near the Sarawak-Kalimantan border.

The annual programme, which is now in its sixth year, saw the participation of more than 160 volunteers from Bank Islam, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), UCSI Sarawak Campus and Sekolah Kebangsaan Sematan.

## A unified effort

Kicking off the event at the town's multipurpose hall, Bank Islam's general manager (East Malaysia region) Abdul Malek Abdullah in his opening speech said, "The Green Day programme is one of Bank Islam's corporate responsibility initiatives that aim to preserve the natural environment.

"Previous Green Day activities included the planting of trees, cleaning up of beaches and awareness talks, which were carried out in Sabah, Malacca, Selangor and Terengganu," said Abdul Malek.

He added, "For our first Green Day event in Sarawak, we will deploy five artificial reefs made from cockleshells that were produced by Unimas."

Lowered into the seawaters of Sematan and Lundu district, these artificial reefs are designed to raise the population of marine life in the surrounding waters of Sematan and consequently increase the

economic levels of the local community through fishing and tourism.

According to Azmir Abdul Malek, head of brand and marketing communications at Bank Islam, "We contributed a total of RM30,000 for Unimas to produce the artificial reefs and we estimate there is much to be gained in terms of social return of investment as we have the collective expertise from the Unimas research team, Department of Fisheries Malaysia and Forestry Department of Sarawak working on this project.

"We are looking forward to seeing the outcome of this programme in a few months' time, from the data that will be provided by the team monitoring the reef park – especially on the population of marine life and number of tourists visiting the town."

## Fun for the kids

A series of activities was organised as part of this two-day event; the first event on the second day was for the little ones.

By mid-morning, laughter and excitement could be heard from the local primary school, as all 105 students of SK Sematan participated enthusiastically in the Green Day Challenge.

Loosely based on reality shows such as *The Amazing Race*, the Green Day Challenge required students to complete a series of tasks such as answering questions related to environmental conservation and collecting rubbish from a section of the local beach.

While this was taking place, a group of volunteers comprising students from UCSI University Sarawak Campus were busy sprucing up and tidying the school compound.

A group of artists led by Sylvester Jussem from Unimas also painted a colourful mural of an underwater scene depicting the five cockleshell artificial reefs and local sea creatures on the wall of one of the school buildings.

## Engaging the community

That day, the normally quiet and peaceful town was buzzing with

life as the local community enjoyed the activities arranged by the volunteers.

"We feel that contributing to a greener and cleaner planet is everyone's responsibility so we try to engage different segments of the community in our activities," says Azmir.

Also present at the event were representatives from the Department of Fisheries Malaysia and Forestry Department of Sarawak who were the advisors and enforcers in charge of the artificial reef deployment.

The Department of Fisheries also brought with them a combination of fry that were to be released into the sea as part of the event launch.

Besides being treated to a Gendang Sarawak performance on stage, residents were keen to receive free dental check-ups

provided by the Health Ministry and learn new culinary techniques and tips from UCSI University's hospitality students who conducted free cooking demonstrations.

## Meaningful contributions

On stage, AMAL took the opportunity to make a zakat presentation (donations under Islamic law for charitable and religious purposes) to the underprivileged.

The recipients of goody bags and monetary aid included 25 individuals from the local community, SK Sematan along with 30 of its pupils, and Masjid Noorul Islam Kampung Tanah Hitam.

A special prize presentation was held for the winning groups of the Green Day Challenge and boys under 12 years old who won the azan (call to prayer) competition that took place at the mosque the night before.

Prize winners received school bags, medals and food hampers sponsored by AMAL Bank Islam.

The events on stage soon led to the penultimate activity of the day – a lucky draw that saw residents taking home food hampers and three bicycles that were offered as the top prizes.

The event concluded with a free lunch for the townsfolk.

■ For more information on AMAL, visit [amal.bankislam.com.my](http://amal.bankislam.com.my).

# The cockleshell artificial reef

DEVELOPED by University Malaysia Sarawak's Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, five pyramid-shaped artificial reefs made partly from cockleshells were lowered into a reef park around Talang Talang Islands near Sematan, Sarawak, as it was identified to be an eco-friendly solution to encourage the growth of marine life in the

surrounding waters.

Generally regarded as waste material, the cockleshells were not only an economic alternative building material but the shell properties and mineral composition was discovered to improve water pH levels.

The rough texture of cockleshells mimics that of the

natural reef and has been shown to be more effective at attracting fish compared with smooth surfaces, thus expediting the growth of marine organisms and corals.

This is the first time Bank Islam has incorporated an innovation from a local university for its Green Day activities.

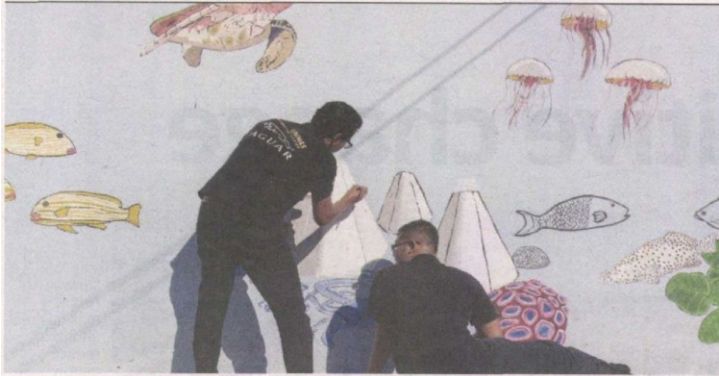
The deployment of the artificial reef was carried out under the guidance of Department of Fisheries (Sematan office) and Sarawak Forestry Department.



Five cockleshell artificial reefs were lowered into the seawaters near Sematan to raise the population of marine life.



Bank Islam's head of brand and marketing communications Azmir Abdul Malek (in green) and general manager (East Malaysia region) Abdul Malek Abdullah (in black) with other Bank Islam staff at the launch of Green Day 2016.



Left: A colourful mural was painted in SK Sematan as part of Green Day 2016.

Right: Children of SK Sematan participating in the Green Day Challenge.