

# Melaleuca research centre a boost for east coast

By FARID WAHAB

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Sultan Mizan (second from left) being briefed by Yap on the research facility. Looking on (right) is Tengku Mohd Arifin. – Courtesy photo

A NEWLY opened melaleuca nursery and research facility in Setiu, Terengganu, is set to accelerate the reforestation project in the east coast district. Operated by Benua Hijau Sdn Bhd, the facility is to coordinate efforts to plant 100,000 melaleuca trees at Tasik Berombak, a freshwater lake. Terengganu Ruler Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin, who launched the facility, was also given a walk-through of the place by Benua Hijau project director Dr Paul Yap.

Datuk Seri Ron Ho Kam Choy, managing director of Straits Energy Resources Bhd, the parent company of Benua Hijau, who was present, in a statement, thanked Yayasan DiRaja Sultan Mizan, Terengganu State Parks Management Council (MPTN) and Setiu Land and District Office for their support in making the facility a reality.

He added that the research facility reflected the company's hands-on approach to environmental preservation programmes. "Rather than relying on a third party to carry out the reforestation, we will manage the works ourselves. "With this newly launched facility, we will be able to oversee every process involved in the planting project," he said.

On Sept 24, Star Metro reported about the initiative to plant 100,000 melaleuca trees around Tasik Berombak.

The project spans 80ha in the 1,574ha Setiu Wetlands State Park and will be implemented over five years. An agreement was signed between Straits Energy Resources, MPTN and local authorities to kick-start the project. The initiative was part of Terengganu government's effort to restore the degraded wetland, which was the largest such landscape on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

Prior to the opening of the facility, Benua Hijau employees were using a rented house in Kampung Pengkalan Gelap as a temporary base. Ho said significant focus would go towards researching the commercial aspects of melaleuca trees. He called on the private sectors and non-governmental organisations to lend support and take part in the planting efforts. Also present at the launch were Straits Energy Resources and Benua Hijau chairman Datuk Seri Tengku Baharuddin Sultan Mahmud Al Muktafi Billah Shah and MPTN director Tengku Mohd Arifin Tengku A. Rahman.