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| Headline   | Mission to save wild plants |             |                     |
| MediaTitle | The Star                    |             |                     |
| Date       | 16 Feb 2022                 | Color       | Full Color          |
| Section    | Nation                      | Circulation | 175,986             |
| Page No    | 14                          | Readership  | 527,958             |
| Language   | English                     | ArticleSize | 358 cm <sup>2</sup> |
| Journalist | N/A                         | AdValue     | MYR 18,017          |
| Frequency  | Daily                       | PR Value    | MYR 54,051          |



# Mission to save wild plants

Shutterbug Suzairi replants endangered species in his own backyard

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Photographer Suzairi Zakaria's love for forest plants has led him to set up a conservatory for the endangered species in the compound of his house in Setiu, Terengganu.

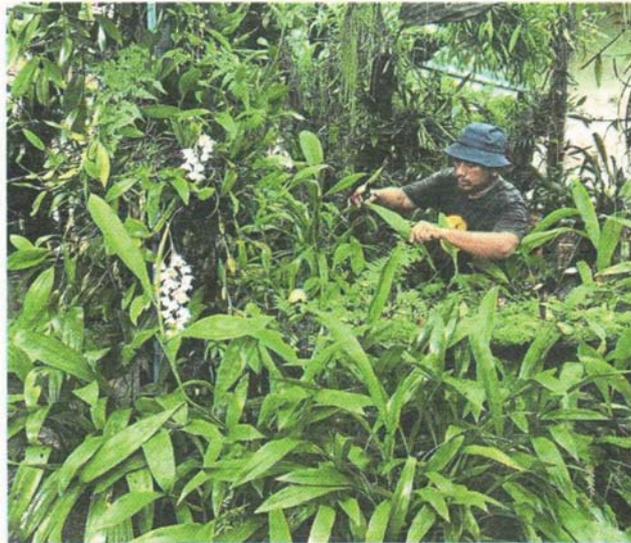
Suzairi, who has been involved in the tropical rainforest conservation efforts since 2015, has successfully replanted more than 2,000 species of forest plants, including 200 wild orchids found in bris soil and logging areas in the state.

He said forest plants such as ferns, wild ginger, pitcher plants, hoyo and various other species as well as wild orchids were replanted in his house compound, which has been turned into a conservatory called WildDome Research and Conservation Centre.

The centre now becomes a reference for conservationists, researchers and orchid enthusiasts from all over the country.

The 46-year-old, who is also known as Dome, said the passion to conserve wild orchids and forest plants started when he often visited the Setiu Wetland to capture the lush forest landscapes rich with flora and fauna.

"There are places that I revisited that have changed due to land and forest exploration. Most of which are the natural habitats of wild plants and orchids.



**Eco warrior at work:** Suzairi replanting some wild orchid species facing extinction at his backyard in Setiu, Terengganu. — Bernama

"So, whichever forest plants and wild orchids that can be saved, I will bring back and replant them," he said, adding that he has extended the conservation efforts to other logging areas, including Tasik Kenyir.

Suzairi had also succeeded in discovering several new species such as pitcher plants *Nepenthes latiffiana* and *Nepenthes domei*, as well as wild orchids such as *Bromheadia petuangensis*, *Dendrobium ruseae* and *Dendrobium mizanii*, which

was named after the Sultan of Terengganu, Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin.

"I need to work with qualified botanists to elaborate on the findings of new species because each discovery needs to have a written research paper to confirm the findings in any scientific journal," he said, reported Bernama.

He is currently working with Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT), Universiti Putra Malaysia, the Forest Research Institute Malaysia and the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute.

Apart from being appointed Guest Fellow at the Faculty of Science and Marine Environment at UMT, Suzairi has also received international recognition from a Guatemalan orchid expert, who named a new orchid species in the country after him (*Chysis Domei*).

Meanwhile, UMT Faculty of Science and Marine Environment senior lecturer Assoc Prof Dr Jamilah Mohd Salim said Suzairi's efforts had raised the awareness of the importance of conserving biodiversity among local communities.

"Suzairi's role also helps university researchers to know more about natural phenomena that occur in the forest," she said.