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National

6.6 million trees planted along coastal areas since 2005

SUNGAI PETANI: A total of 6.6 million trees have been planted along the country's coastal areas covering 2,887.63 hectares until last July through the Mangrove and Suitable Tree Species Planting Programme.

Water, Land and Natural Resources Minister, Dr Xavier Jayakumar said the programme involved collaboration with various parties including the Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia and Forest Research Institute Malaysia with an allocation of RM54.9 million since its implementation in 2005.

"The allocation has been used for planting and maintenance of mangroves and trees of suitable species, on research and development, monitoring, expansion and public awareness programmes."

He said this at the national-level commemoration of the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem at the Sungai Merbok Tourism Complex, near here.

The event was officiated by Kedah Menteri Besar, Datuk Seri Mukhriz Tun Dr Mahathir.

Dr Xavier said the programme was implemented after the tsunami incident 15 years ago as a government effort to protect and conserve mangrove areas.



Dr Xavier Jayakumar

"We are aware that mangrove forests are one of nature's treasures that are unique and rich in natural resources and biodiversity.

"In this regard, mangrove forests play a very important role in providing ecosystem services including as a natural buffer against strong winds and waves.

"They also contribute to, among others, climate stability and creation of recreational and ecotourism areas which could spur socio-economic development for the local communities, if managed to the optimum," he said.

At the event, Mukhriz also launched the 'Kedah State Mangrove Forest Management Plan 2020 to 2029', the first management plan using the format and guidelines issued by the Water, Land and Natural Resources Ministry. — Bernama