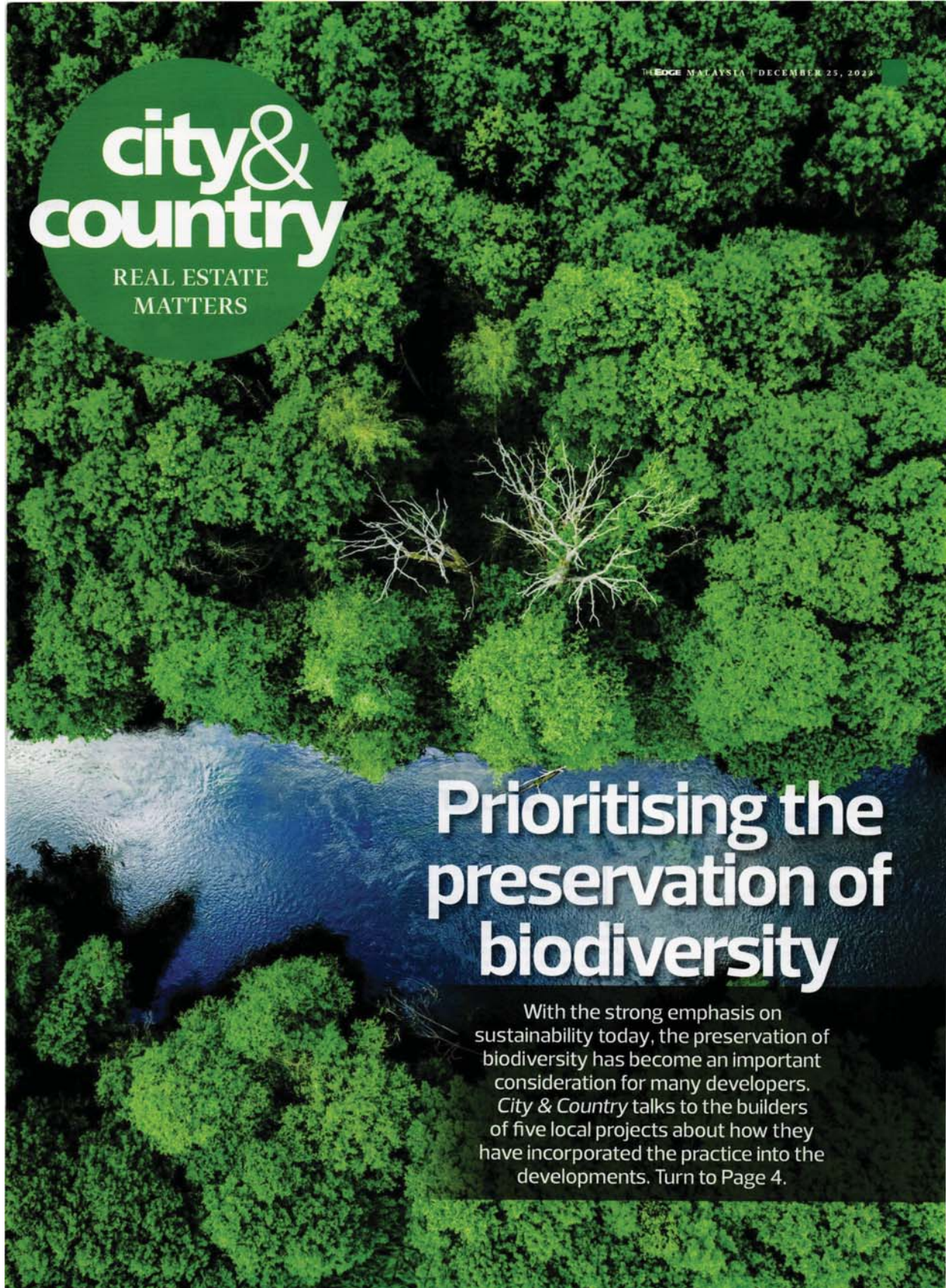


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city & country
REAL ESTATE MATTERS

THE EDGE MALAYSIA | DECEMBER 25, 2023

Prioritising the preservation of biodiversity

With the strong emphasis on sustainability today, the preservation of biodiversity has become an important consideration for many developers. *City & Country* talks to the builders of five local projects about how they have incorporated the practice into the developments. Turn to Page 4.

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COVER STORY

Preserving biodiversity

BY THE CITY & COUNTRY TEAM
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With sustainability growing in importance today, the preservation of biodiversity has gained attention as human activity – especially property development and construction – alters landscapes and ecological processes on a larger scale. There is an urgent need for improved management and conservation of land, and more local property developers are looking into this matter.

For the final issue for the year, *City & Country* asks five developers that have preserved biodiversity in a township project to name the one in their portfolio that best showcases their beliefs, and explain how they achieved it.



Mangala Estate's island in the main lake and the mangroves surrounding the lake are a safe haven for birds of various species and river otters

PICTURES BY FRANKY GROUP



MANGALA ESTATE
BOUTIQUE RESORT
FRANKY GROUP

Managing director Datuk Franky Chua Goon Eng: Mangala Estate Boutique Resort (formerly known as Mangala Resort & Spa), which has won multiple awards for its rehabilitation efforts, did not achieve its glory in mere days. More than 20 years were spent with consistent efforts to improve and maintain the natural habitat within the development. Strict conservation policies were imposed to protect and enhance the local biodiversity and revived ecosystem.

For example, fishing is strictly not allowed, as fish are a continuous food source for river otters and birds such as the popular kingfisher. The isolated island within the main lake and the mangroves surrounding the lake are left undisturbed, as they serve as safe havens for wildlife. In addition, eco-friendly operational measures were implemented, such as the strict use of buggies and bicycles as modes of transport within the resort.

Simple, yet effective, solutions were also engineered to continuously protect and propagate the local wildlife species. Mini barrages made from recycled railway sleep-



ers were installed at several spots within the resort to regulate the water levels of the lakes and wetland areas. This natural method helped fish from the nearby river to flow upstream into the resort lakes and multiplied the diversity of the existing habitat while conserving adequate water sources to irrigate the development all year round, even during the drought season. Building masses were also intentionally designed to remain small in scale to naturally blend with the surrounding landscape.

Adaptive strategies employed to address unforeseen challenges to biodiversity include replanting efforts that are scheduled on a routine basis, forming a green canopy and shade to lower the temperature of the

area. Special fruit tree species were planted to attract and supply food for more wildlife, catering for different bird species. A variety of trees were also selected to prevent the growth of a dominant species and promote diversity.

Nature sighting activities and educational walks are regularly conducted by in-house guides to educate guests about nature awareness efforts in the resort. The resort actively hires and upskills members of the neighbouring community.

Franky Group hopes to replicate the ongoing conservation efforts in its upcoming projects, most notably, Arunya Residence, the first phase of an 80-acre mixed development project in the heart of KL north. With more than 400 trees and 16,000 shrubs and

other plants, Arunya Residence hopes to offer similar comfort levels felt by Mangala Estate's guests.

The only difference is that Arunya Residence is located in an urban jungle, whereas Mangala Estate is situated 2½ hours away from the city. Some of the past team members that have contributed to Mangala Estate's successful conservation efforts, along with new ones, have been appointed and tasked to replicate the success of past rehabilitation projects in the group's future projects, starting with Arunya Residence. The green-covered facilities borrowed its concept from Mangala Estate, where each villa was designed intuitively to blend with nature.

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COVER STORY

The canopy of trees along walking paths helps lower the temperature in the area

Summit Park's interlocking block wall system helped in the treatment of the steep engineered slope to allow for backfilling of soil for tree planting



SUMMIT PARK, SOUTHVILLE CITY
MAH SING GROUP BHD

Strategies and operations director Jane Leong: The 9.62-acre Summit Park in Southville City — currently maintained by the group — is a community-friendly recreational park that acts as an urban forest park in the township. It is a former palm oil estate with a mountainous landform, and one of the specific features implemented to

enhance greenery involves the introduction of a block wall system to the existing slope. The surface of the steep engineered slope was fortified with hardened soil, which was unsuitable for hydro-seeding and led to rapid water run-off.

To address this without altering the hilly landform or the steep slope, we employed an interlocking block wall system, which was used to treat the steep engineered slope, facilitated the backfilling of soil for tree planting and allowed the creeper *Ficus Pumila* to spread on the blocks. This approach minimises disruption to the engineered slope, preserving the existing landform.

Not only does it reduce the disturbance to the existing slope stability, but it also forms a flat area as a buffer zone with tree planting to hold the soil together, preventing rapid water from washing off the steep slope. The thick canopy of the trees intercepts rainwater directly, slowing down the water run-off on the slope and preventing erosion.

A total of more than 1,400 trees were planted, encompassing 26 species chosen based on their status as native forest species, ensuring adaptability to local soil and climate conditions. This has revitalised the

micro-habitat for urban wildlife, resulting in the return of birds and butterflies, among others, thus encouraging the propagation of local wildlife species.

One of the main design strategies for conservation was rehabilitating the poor soil quality at the site. Given the challenges posed by poor soil quality and a rocky slope surface, the planting concept was largely shifted from single planting to cluster planting during implementation. We aim to enhance the volume of topsoil available and provide more space for the spreading of tree crowns and roots. Planting trees in clusters also promotes healthy competition for growth.

The rocky slope surface was treated with legume plants that will provide biomass as organic compost to poor soil condition. The incorporation of groundcover helps with the decomposition of the crop residue and will release nitrogen, which is the essential mineral for trees through soil rehabilitation. It possesses nitrogen-fixing capabilities and serves as effective erosion prevention with its root system holding the soil.

As the township was an extensive oil palm estate, we are consulting with local

agencies to seek guidance on restoring biodiversity in the new development. They include the Forest Research Institute Malaysia, Malaysian Palm Oil Board, Federal Land Development Authority Department of Environment, Natural Resources Environment Board, Environment Conservation Department and Malaysian Palm Oil Council.

Simultaneously, the group is actively researching and studying opportunities to recycle and repurpose the existing oil palm vegetation in an innovative manner, transforming it into a distinctive and functional feature applicable to our development.

In envisioning its long-term sustainability beyond the initial implementation, we have strategically planned the selection of planting species to prioritise the ongoing maintenance and operation of the project while minimising its environmental impact.

Strategies that Mah Sing adopts to address unforeseen challenges include enhancing the overall ecological quality, extent, capacity, structure and functionality of the site and its surrounding ecological network; restoring and connecting existing habitats and landscape features that hold significant importance for wildlife; compensating for features lost to development through various measures; and monitoring the condition of existing, restored, enhanced and newly created or translocated habitats and landscape features crucial for wildlife.

PICTURES BY MAH SING



(Left) The rocky slope surface in the park was treated with legume plants, which provide biomass as organic compost

(Below) The species of trees chosen for the park revitalised the micro-habitat for urban wildlife, resulting in the return of birds and butterflies



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COVER STORY



SETIA BAYUEMAS LAKE PARK
S P SETIA BHD

Divisional general manager Razly Mohd Rus: In Setia Bayuemas Lake Park, there is habitat restoration and management where existing trees and soil were retained during development, promoting carbon storage, micro-climate cooling and erosion prevention. This provides vital habitat for various species and facilitates natural ecological processes.

The park also features a diverse range of native plants, creating a supportive environment for native fauna. This fosters a self-sustaining ecosystem with natural predator-prey relationships.

The landscape architecture incorporates elements that mimic the natural surroundings, including open grasslands and wetlands. This creates diverse habitats for a wider range of species.

There are also the lubuk fish nursery habitat and Seroja dragonfly garden, which provide breeding and feeding grounds for specific species, enhancing the overall aquatic biodiversity of the lake.

An ecological study has been conducted to gather baseline data on existing flora and fauna before and after development, allowing for the monitoring of changes and the effectiveness of conservation efforts.

We also collaborated with environmental experts to ensure the park's development and management are informed by sound ecological principles.

To promote community engagement and education, signage was installed throughout the park to educate visitors about the local flora and fauna, fostering appreciation and understanding of the importance of biodiversity conservation.

The park also hosts events and programmes related to nature appreciation and environmental education, engaging the community in biodiversity conservation efforts.

These combined efforts have resulted in a significant positive impact on the local wildlife population. The park has seen an increase in the diversity and abundance of various species, including birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects and fish. This success demonstrates the effectiveness of the park's design and management in protecting and propagating local wildlife.

The ongoing success of these efforts requires continued monitoring, research and adaptation. By remaining committed to these principles and working collaboratively with the community, Setia Bayuemas Lake Park can continue to serve as a model for sustainable development and wildlife conservation in Malaysia.

We are increasingly adopting sustainable practices and incorporating biodiversity conservation into their projects. Regular reporting on biodiversity status and



The Melaleuca Deck overlooking the lake



To promote community engagement and education, signage installed throughout the park educate visitors about the local flora and fauna and inculcate the importance of biodiversity conservation

conservation efforts is becoming standard practice in the industry.

To engage with the community, besides hosting events, we collaborate with local NGOs and environmental organisations to organise volunteer activities, clean-up drives and awareness campaigns related to biodiversity conservation. This approach allows the park to leverage the expertise and resources of various stakeholders, further amplifying the impact of their conservation efforts.

It also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among the community, en-

couraging residents to actively participate in protecting the park's environment and wildlife.

The park also uses social media platforms and other communication channels to share information about biodiversity initiatives, upcoming events and educational resources.

By actively involving the local community in various ways, the park effectively promotes biodiversity awareness, encourages participation in conservation efforts, and builds a sense of shared responsibility for the park's ecological well-being. This collaborative approach ensures the long-



Dragonflies signify good water quality and the abundance of reptiles such as lizards reflects a thriving ecosystem

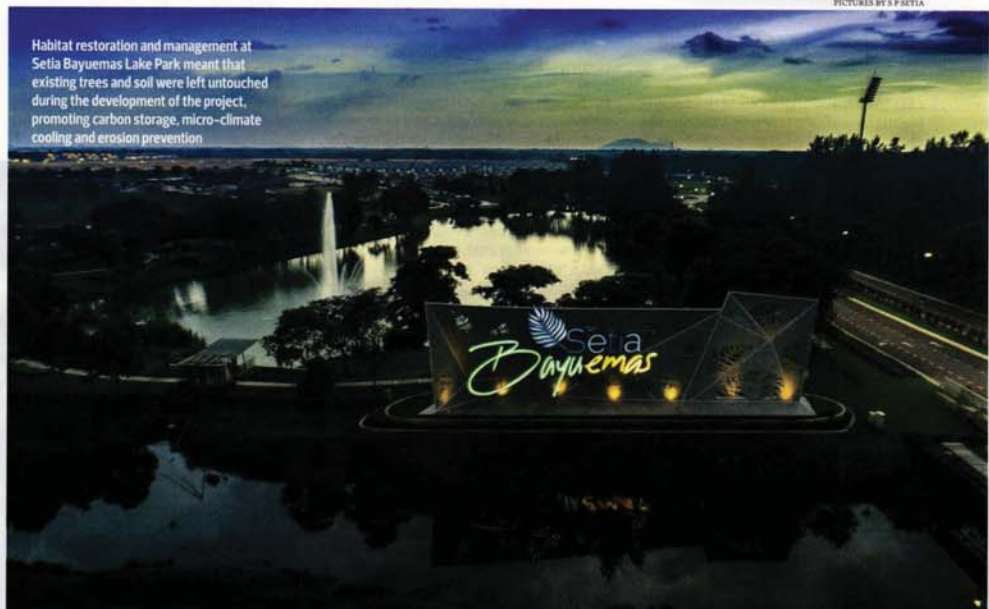
term sustainability of the park and its diverse ecosystems.

As for adaptive management strategies to address unforeseen challenges to biodiversity, the park's design incorporates the principles of sustainability and resilience, such as native plant selection, the use of renewable energy and recycled material, and natural drainage systems. This suggests a proactive approach to adapting to potential environmental challenges.

We are adopting industry standards and best practices to address unforeseen challenges and ensure the long-term success of their projects.

Our collaborations with environmental experts and participation in industry networks provide the park with access to the latest research and best practices in adaptive management for biodiversity conservation.

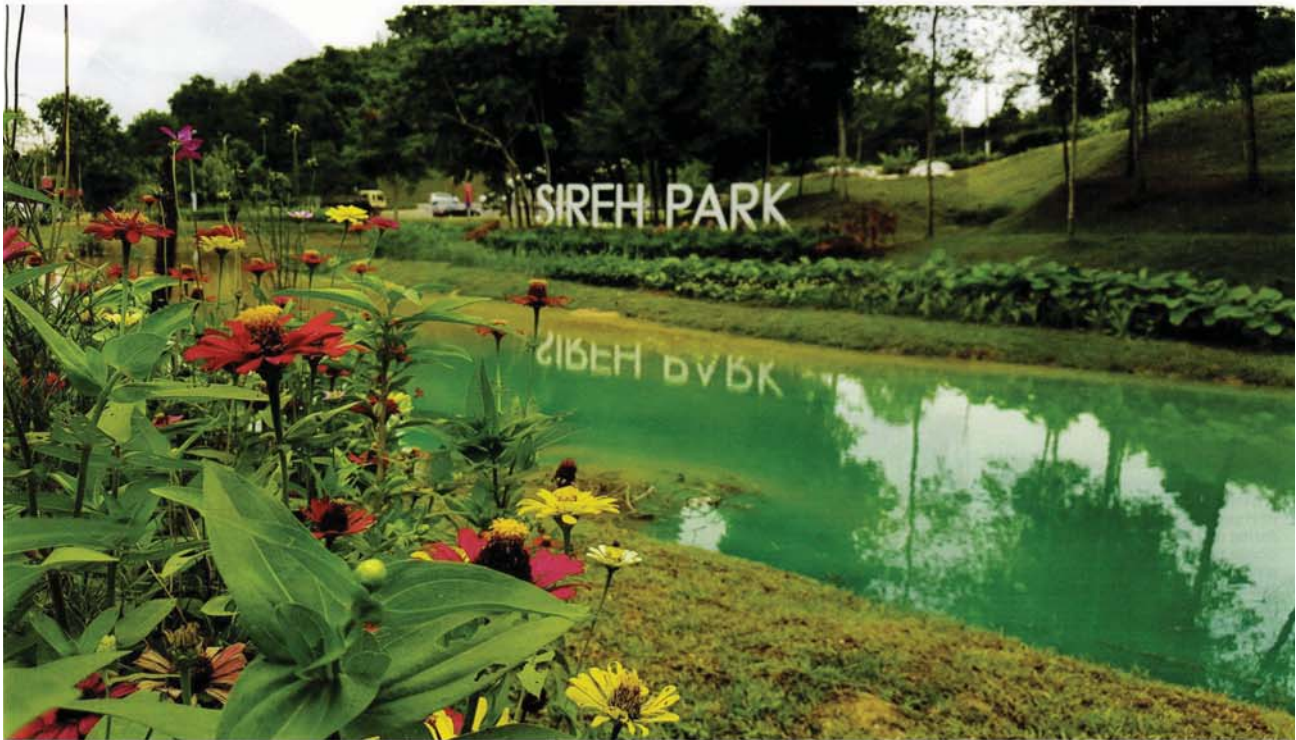
PICTURES BY S P SETIA



Habitat restoration and management at Setia Bayuemas Lake Park meant that existing trees and soil were left untouched during the development of the project, promoting carbon storage, micro-climate cooling and erosion prevention

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SIREH PARK, ISKANDAR PUTERI
UEM SUNRISE BHD

CEO Sufian Abdullah: One of the notable, highlighted efforts taken by UEM Sunrise Bhd to preserve the nation's biodiversity is SIREH Park in Iskandar Puteri, Johor, where we established a partnership with SIREH Park Trust, called The Nusajaya Natural Heritage Trust, to promote the park as a model of ecological sustainability.

Spanning 343 acres, SIREH Park is a natural heritage park that doubles as a hub that actively conserves, studies and promotes biodiversity while being a recreational park open to the public.

The park has made its own organic composting from green waste collected during the park's routine maintenance as part of the 3R (Reduce, Recover and Recycle) initiatives. The goal is to plant 25,000 trees in the park in aid of the annual sequestration of about 300,000kg of carbon dioxide.

SIREH Park is used as a multi-purpose space that not only fosters an active lifestyle for the public to visit and appreciate the surrounding nature but concurrently aims to promote a diverse biodiversity of flora and fauna through its tree-planting programme.

The park places an emphasis on restoring and enhancing ecosystems in its vicinity as

part of its efforts to protect and propagate the local wildlife species. An initiative on habitat restoration also took place to support the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List native species, including Kelat Kayu, Timah-Timah, Penang Sloe and Bertih Paya.

Through SIREH Park, we participated in iNaturalist, a project space in collaboration with Think City for the City Nature Challenge — an annual, global, community science competition to document urban biodiversity.

It is a non-profit social network of naturalists, citizen scientists and biologists to document SIREH Park's biodiversity elements as part of environmental education — providing opportunities for scientific collaboration with interested parties looking to participate in the programme.

SIREH Park engages with its community through educational initiatives such as eco-learning, volunteering, school outreach programmes and hands-on workshops. The park offers diverse attractions and amenities that cater for all ages and interests, with walking paths and multi-elevation jogging trails for outdoor exercise, leisure, picnics and games.

In November 2022, UEM Sunrise organised a "Grow a Tree" programme in collaboration with SIREH Park to improve the air quality, habitat creation and ecological rebalancing. This event was attended by 120 participants, comprising employees, members of its customer loyalty programme and residents from UEM Sunrise's projects in the Southern region.

Apart from planting trees, participants were also involved in jungle trekking, green craft activities and trivia quizzes to promote biodiversity awareness. This initiative is part of our efforts to appreciate the natural beauty of local forests and foster environmental values in the community by empowering and acknowledging their actions in preserving nature.

Through SIREH Park, we also partnered with the Johor Bahru District Education

Department and the Johor State Fisheries Office in a freshwater fish breeding pilot project to preserve the native species and aid the rebalancing of the fish population in the local aquatic ecosystem.

We collaborate with various organisations and governmental agencies, such as MCIS Life Insurance, Flex, Tenaga Nasional Bhd and the Iskandar Puteri City Council, to maintain the park's diversity and explore opportunities to promote restoration efforts.

Among our ongoing efforts are implementing programmes to prevent and control the spread of non-native species through gathering and organising data and identifying the various species inhabiting the park.

In addition, continuously educating the public about nature appreciation and environmental values is key to elevating awareness — overall, aligning with UEM Sunrise's mission to build more sustainable living for communities. ■

The 343-acre SIREH Park is a natural heritage park that doubles as a hub that actively conserves, studies and promotes biodiversity while being a recreational park open to the public

The park is used as a multipurpose space for the public to visit and appreciate nature

