

UMT turtle conservation efforts see fourfold nesting increase over 30 years

By **Bernama**

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Green turtle conservation efforts by Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) at Pantai Chagar Hutang on Redang Island have yielded a three- to fourfold nesting increase over 30 years. — BERNAMA

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KUALA NERUS: Green turtle conservation efforts by Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) at Pantai Chagar Hutang on Redang Island have yielded a three- to fourfold nesting increase over 30 years.

UMT Marine Conservation Centre head Associate Professor Dr Mohd Uzair Rusli said green turtle nests rose from 400 to 500 annually in the early 1990s to between 1,500 and 2,000 nests a year since 2016.

He said 4,609 turtles had been tagged over the period, with one female recorded returning to lay eggs 79 times over 28 years, making the site one of the world's most comprehensive long-term monitoring locations.

"Such long-term records are extremely rare worldwide. The population growth

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season. Findings published in the journal Royal Society Open Science show that the remigration interval is becoming longer," he said.

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Uzair said UMT research suggests the change is linked to the condition of marine feeding habitats, as turtles migrate thousands of kilometres to foraging grounds before returning to nesting beaches years later.

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He said depleted food sources or deteriorating habitats mean turtles require more time to accumulate sufficient energy to produce eggs.

His team is investigating two potential factors: climate change affecting the productivity of habitats like seagrass meadows, and increasing turtle populations at feeding grounds.

"As more turtles are successfully conserved, competition for food resources also increases. Both factors mean turtles need a longer recovery period before the next breeding season.

"Turtle conservation has entered a new phase. The real challenge lies at sea, as turtles spend more than 95 per cent of their life cycle in the water. Success depends on how well we protect their feeding habitats, seagrass meadows, migratory routes, and the marine ecosystem," he said.

Uzair added that the Chagar Hutang Turtle Sanctuary, established in 1993, has evolved into an ecosystem comprising the university, researchers, volunteers, local rangers, students, the local community, and strategic partners.

The sanctuary's daily operations are led by a chief researcher, supported by local rangers, postgraduate students, research assistants, industrial trainees, and more than 7,000 volunteers.

"This approach has enabled Pantai Chagar Hutang to continue operating despite limited resources. It is a community-based conservation model led by UMT.

"We are also strengthening the Environmental Sustainability Waqf Fund in collaboration with UMT Ihsan and RHB Islamic to establish a sustainable source of funding, ensuring research, conservation, student training, and community development can continue without relying entirely on short-term grants," he said.

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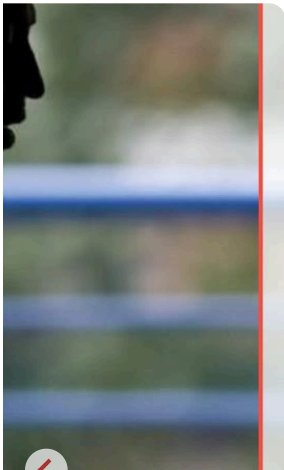
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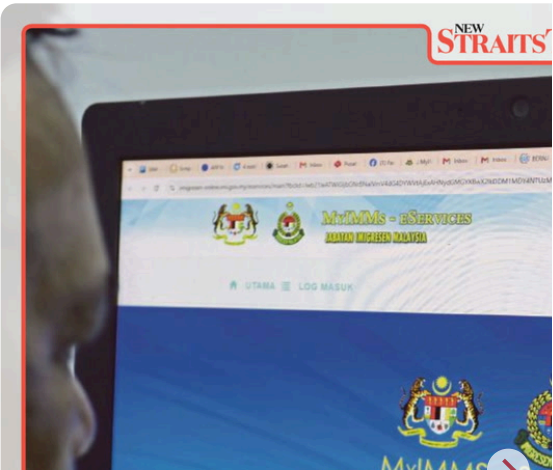
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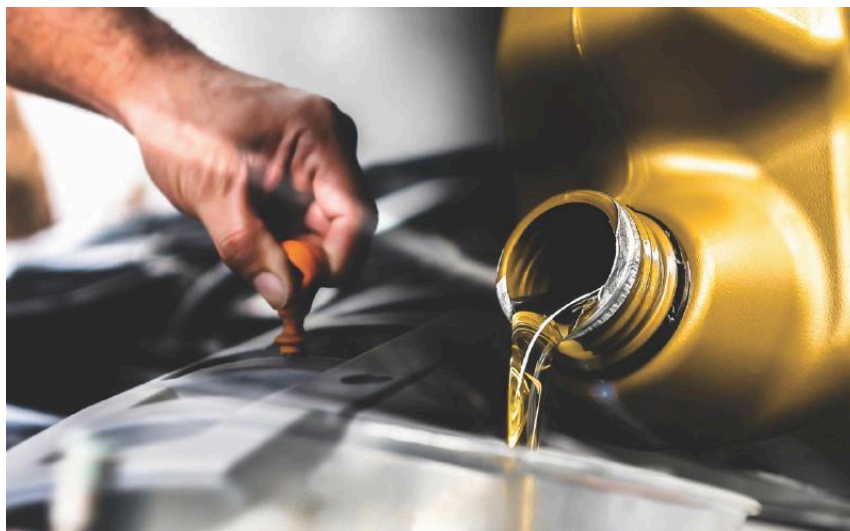


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