

Company teams up with UPM to preserve seagrass



Khaled Nordin (pointing) being briefed on the latest Forest City project in Gelang Patah.

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GELANG PATAH

By **KATHLEEN ANN KILI**
kili@thestar.com.my

COUNTRY Garden Pacificview (CGPV) has been carrying out continuous efforts for environmental conservation, including some 40.47ha of seagrass preservation within its Forest City project.

Forest City vice-managing director Syarul Izam Sarifudin said the company had invested some RM2.5mil to conduct the preservation in collaboration with Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

"We have as many as 17 types of seagrass growing over a 2km stretch in-between our islands," he said after a visit by state government officials to Forest City.

He said the company had been cultivating the seagrass and UPM would monitor the area monthly.

"UPM has also taken samples and cultivates the seagrass at the university for further research.

"Only five to 10% of the existing seagrass bed had been affected when we conducted reclamation works in the area, which is considered minimal in view of the mammoth project we are carrying out," he said.

Syarul added that although they had not sighted any sea

cows or what is locally known as dugong, the group has seen trails to show movement of the shy creature along the seabed.

"As the dugong feeds on seagrass, our experts have seen trails to prove that the mammal has come into our area to eat," he said, adding that the trails were spotted between October and December over the past three years.

It was reported in *The Star* that the vast developments taking place in south Johor, which was once a popular feeding ground for dugong, has led to its dwindling numbers.

Fishermen along the straits have claimed that back in the 1960s and 1970s, the species would often be spotted feeding on the abundant spoon seagrass, their main diet, but sightings have drastically decreased due to developments.

Meanwhile, during the visit, Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Mohamed Khaled Nordin encouraged locals to grab the opportunity to start businesses at the ongoing multibillion development project Forest City here.

"While the target market to take up the residential units here are foreigners, I believe that in terms of business, locals will be given priority.

"They can operate businesses such as laundry and cleaning services as well as convenience stores in the area," he added.