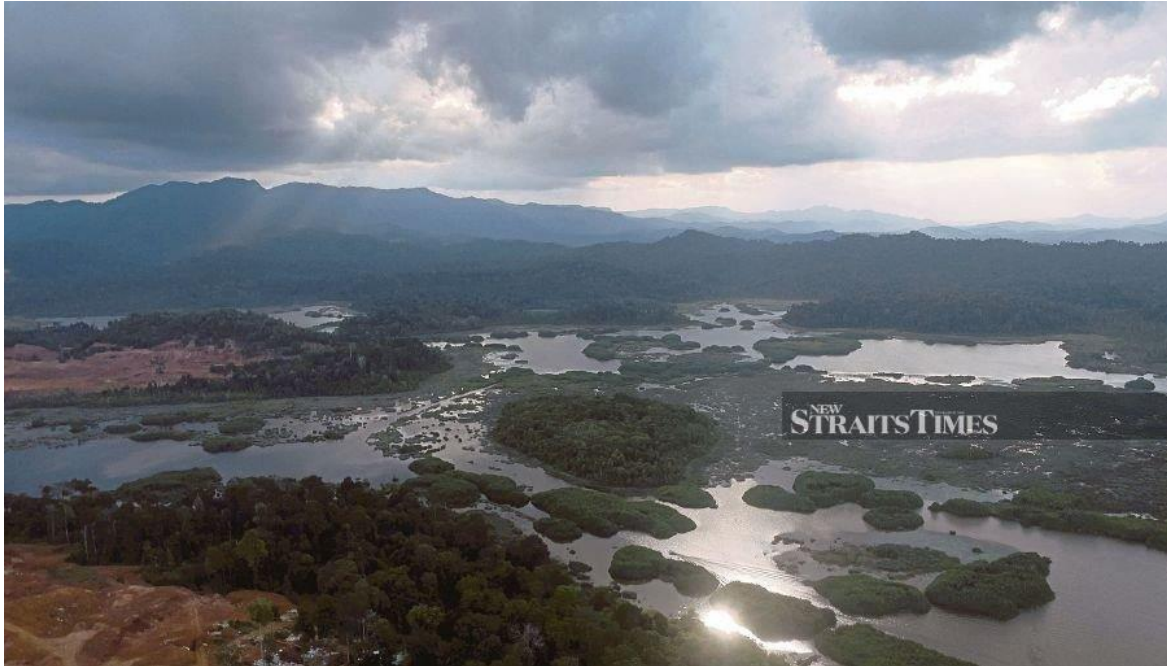


Pahang govt all out to preserve Tasik Chini's Unesco listing

August 2, 2022 @ 3:17pm



Rehabilitation efforts to restore the greenery around Tasik Chini, once marred by long-standing environmental issues, has reached almost 80 percent. - NSTP/FARIZUL HAFIZ AWANG

KUANTAN: Rehabilitation efforts to restore the greenery around Tasik Chini, once marred by long-standing environmental issues, has reached almost 80 percent.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Wan Rosdy Wan Ismail (BN-Jelai) said during his visit to the lake about two weeks ago he noticed that some 80 percent of the lake area has improved and was now covered in green.

He said government agencies in Pahang had embarked on various efforts to ensure the country's second largest freshwater lake and its vicinity returned to its former glory.

"The lake's restoration efforts included planting ground cover plants in an area of approximately 200ha at a cost of 3.95mil. The Forest Development Fund was allocated for the replanting efforts which began on Aug 23 last year and was completed on July 31 this year.

"The erosion and sediment control restoration project along the 1.75km stretch at the lake's buffer zone was completed on June 22 this year at a cost of RM2.5mil. The project using the Joint Recovery Funds was implemented by the state Drainage and Irrigation Department," he said.

Wan Rodsy was replying to a supplementary question from Lee Chean Chung (PKR-Semambu) on the efforts taken by the Pahang government to preserve Tasik Chini's biosphere reserve status which has come under threat recently.

He said the state government during the state executive council meeting on July 14 last year had agreed to gazette 6,502ha of government land as the Chini Forest Reserve under Section 7 of the National Forestry Act 1984 before it was published in the state government gazette on Aug 5, 2021.

Meanwhile, to improve the livelihood of the Orang Asli community near the lake area, Wan Rosdy said the state government had introduced the 'Buy Back Programme' whereby 14 participants have joined the initiative.

"The participants are villagers from the nearby Kampung Gumum, Kampung Cendahan, Kampung Puput and Kampung Melai. They were provided with basic nursery equipment and were allowed to collect forest tree seeds and saplings from the nearby jungle.

"When each sapling reaches a height of approximately three feet, the Pahang Forestry Department will purchase each sapling at RM3. To date, the department has purchased 3,344 saplings," he said.

Wan Rosdy said awareness campaigns through tree replanting programmes were also organised with support from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and villagers near the lake.

"A tree replanting programme was carried out in February this year which saw the participation of 400 individuals including NGO members and villagers. A total of 3,000 saplings were planted during the programme and 1,000 saplings were handed to the villagers," he said,

Later during a press conference at Wisma Sri Pahang, Wan Rosdy said the state government was committed to safeguard Tasik Chini's biosphere reserve status as accorded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

"We have carried out various initiatives and will continue to preserve Tasik Chini's Unesco status. All the rehabilitation works at the lake will be completed before the Sept 30 deadline which was given by Unesco to submit our detailed plan for the lake," he said.

Yesterday, the Regent of Pahang, Tengku Hassan Ibrahim Alam Shah Al-Sultan Abdullah, ordered the Pahang government to act more aggressively to rehabilitate Tasik Chini and not to renew leases for mining near the lake.

Last week, it was reported that Tasik Chini's biosphere reserve status was under threat as the lake allegedly failed to fulfil the criteria to be part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Last year, Wan Rosdy was reported as saying that the state government had imposed a moratorium on the issuance of new licences for mining and zero mining works were reported near the lake.

On July 28, State Environment Committee chairman Datuk Seri Mohd Sharkar Shamsuddin said the Pahang government has made the necessary improvements and submitted a report on the Tasik Chini biosphere reserve site to the Unesco in line with recommendations by the International Advisory Committee on Biosphere Reserves (IACBR).