



Liew (left) with Dr Tambakau, Chendra, Datuk Eliza Goh and visiting Rotarians at the official launch of Project Kelip-Kelip & Mangrove Rehabilitation at the Darau Wetland Ecotourism site on Sunday.

Ministry supports Rotary's fireflies and mangrove rehabilitation project

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KOTA KINABALU: The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment has supported the Rotary Club of Kota Kinabalu Pearl's Project Kelip-Kelip (Fireflies) and Mangrove Rehabilitation at the Darau Wetland Ecotourism site with a contribution of RM31,000.

Its minister, Datuk Seri Christina Liew, announced this at the official launch of the new tourism product at Kg Darau, here, on Sunday.

"Congratulations. I am impressed with RCKK Pearl's farsightedness and innovative project to conserve the fireflies population and to rehabilitate the dwindling mangrove site in the area in collaboration with the local community.

"The lady Rotarians' initiative reflects their concern for environmental protection, ecotourism promotion and the people's socio-economic well-being.

"As the President (Datin Dr Jeanette Tambakau) rightly put it, 'We do not plant for today alone — we plant for tomorrow, for generations yet to come'.

"My ministry is, therefore, doing its bit to ensure the success and sustainability of the Club's laudable endeavour to transform Darau into a full-fledged ecotourism destination," she said.

This meaningful project not only protects the ecosystem and biodiversity at Darau Wetland but also ensures that the community benefits directly from maintaining a healthy and productive environment, Liew added.

She urged the Darau community to pool their resources to promote the Darau Wetland ecotourism site so that more domestic and international visitors will get to know about this relatively new destination.

"I hope the international Rotary Clubs which are project partners will promote this ecotourism product to their colleagues, friends and families back home," she said.

The minister assured that her ministry will render continuous support to ensure that Darau Wetland becomes one of the must visit tourist destinations, saying, "You have river cruise, sunset, kelip-kelip sighting, and many other products that you can develop in the future."

Liew later presented

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Datuk Seri Christina Liew

certificates of appreciation to leaders or representatives from the Rotary Club of Marina City (Singapore), Rotary Club of Taipei (Taiwan), Rotary Club of Taichung Hui Min (Taiwan), Rotary Club of Makati Emerald (Philippines), Rotary Club of Metro Kuala Lumpur, and Rotary Club of Kulai, Johor.

Other recipients included the chairman of Yayasan Kelab-Kelab Rotary Malaysia and president of Sabah Wetland Conservation Society, Datuk Zainie Abdul Aucasa, UMS Director of Institut Biologi Tropika dan Pemuliharaan (IBTP), Associate Professor Dr Fiffy Hanisdah Saikim, UMS Researcher (IBTP) Associate Professor Dr Mahadimenakbar Mohamed Dawood, and chairman of Kg Darau JKKK Asin Lamsin.

Datin Dr Tambakau, who is also the club's Community Service Chairperson (2024-2025), said the minister's presence reflected strong support and commitment towards environmental conservation, eco-tourism, and community empowerment.

Tracing the development of the project, she recalled that it was in 2017-2018, under the leadership of past president Datuk Suzannah Liaw, that RCKK Pearl embarked on what became one of the club's most impactful environmental projects.

"With the collective support of our members, partners, and generous sponsors, we raised close to RM100,000 — funds that enabled us to plant 13,200 trees in total," she said.

• 8,000 mangrove trees were planted at the Sulaman Mangrove Conservation Area, with the helping hands of Rotarians, Rotaractors and Interactors.

• 4,000 mangroves were planted in Darau, through collaboration with the local community, supported by a RM15,000 grant from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment in

2018.

• An additional 5,200 fruit and decorative trees were planted in homes, schools, colleges, and at Likas Bay.

Dr Tambakau also acknowledged the role played by organising chairman Chendramata Sinteh, who is the immediate past president, in continuing to plant an additional 6,000 mangrove seedlings and fostering collaboration with UMS for the Project Kelip-Kelip (Firefly) Eco-Tourism Initiative during her 2024-2025 term.

"Embarking on a pioneering initiative — the Firefly Conservation Program, 'Let's Make the Fireflies Glow Again', was made possible through the expertise of the UMS team, led by Associate Professor Dr Mahadimenakbar.

"Not forgetting Sudin Yusop of UMS and his team as well as Jamaluddin and his Darau Wetland team for their invaluable contribution in helping us plant the 6,000 seedlings as part of our mangrove rehabilitation efforts. Most importantly, we also wish to acknowledge the Darau Wetland.

"Last but not least, we thank the Darau Wetland Community, led by the village chief Jati, for their stewardship and unwavering commitment to community ownership and sustainability," said the president.

Dr Tambakau continued: "This program is not just about trees, nor just about fireflies — it is about restoring balance to our ecosystem, reviving the natural wonder of the Darau River, and empowering the local community to be stewards of both conservation and sustainable eco-tourism."

None of this would be possible without the unwavering support of our partners and sponsors, government partners, universities, community leaders, and all volunteers, she added.