The Star

Thousands of mangrove crabs released into KK wetland to mitigate ecological pressure

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Friday, 18 Sep 2026 | 6:57 PM MYT



Irman (right) and Juanita releasing juvenile mangrove crabs into the Kota Kinabalu Wetland Ramsar Site.

KOTA KINABALU: More than 2,000 juvenile mangrove crabs have been released into Kota Kinabalu's Ramsar wetland to support the recovery of wild stocks facing mounting ecological pressure.

A total of 2,197 Scylla tranquebarica juveniles were released into the Kota Kinabalu Wetland Ramsar Site by Universiti Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) Borneo Marine Research Institute (IMB), together with the Sabah Fisheries Department and Sabah Wetlands Conservation Society (SWCS).

IMB deputy dean (academic and international) Assoc Prof Dr Juanita Joseph said in a statement on Friday (Sept 18) that climate change, overexploitation and the deterioration of natural habitats were putting increasing pressure on mangrove crab populations.

"This is a proactive and scientific step towards ensuring the sustainability of the state's fisheries resources," she said.

The juveniles were produced through collaboration between the IMB hatchery and the Sabah Marine Fish Hatchery Centre under the state Fisheries Department before being returned to their natural habitat.

"The quality juveniles produced through the expertise and cooperation of both hatcheries are now being returned to their natural habitat to support the recovery of wild populations," Juanita added.

She said mangrove crabs played an important role in maintaining the balance of the food chain in mangrove ecosystems, while also supporting the sustainability of the species in Sabah, particularly on the east coast.

The Kota Kinabalu wetland was selected as the release site as its mangrove ecosystem provides a natural nursery ground where young crabs can shelter and grow.

The wetland, located within the city, also serves as a conservation area for the mangrove ecosystem.

The release was officiated by Sabah Fisheries Department deputy director (development) Irman Isnain, Juanita and SWCS honorary secretary Azalene Amelia Kamal Quadra.

UMS said it would continue expanding cooperation with relevant agencies in marine research and conservation efforts.