

49 baby green turtles released

Hatchlings of endangered species freed at national park

By SHARON LING
sharonling@thestar.com.my

KUCHING: A total of 49 green turtle hatchlings have been released into the sea from the beach at Similajau National Park in Bintulu this month.

The Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC) said 45 hatchlings made their way to the sea on Tuesday after four were released on Dec 5.

It said the baby turtles hatched from two clutches of 134 eggs incubated at a turtle hatchery set up in the joint biodiversity, environment and conservation (Beacon) project between SFC and Petronas MLNG.

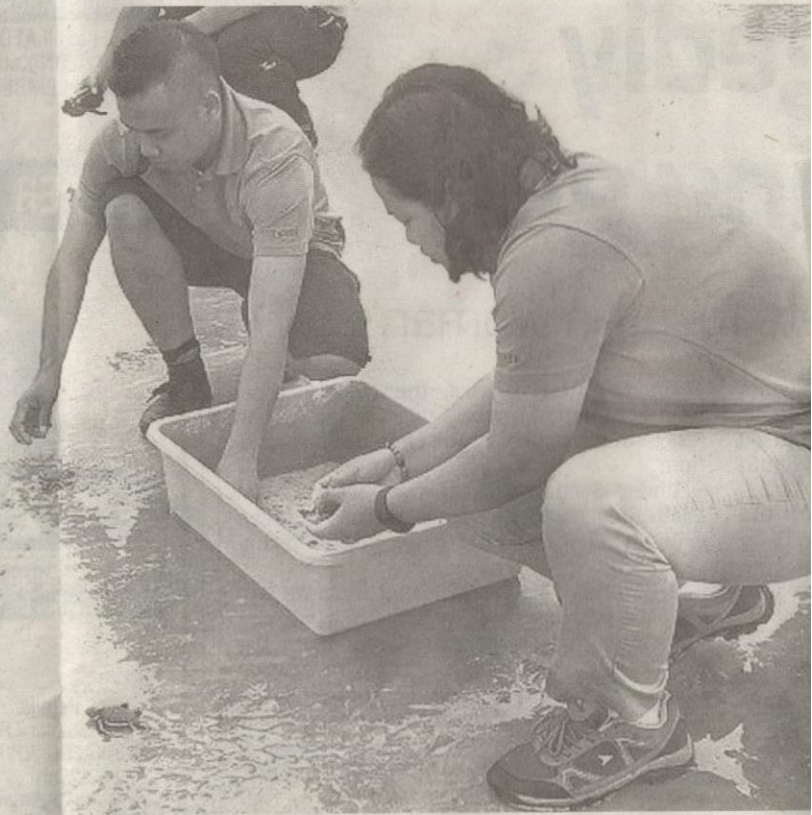
According to SFC, the return of turtles to the beaches of Similajau National Park after a lapse of five years was one of the main successes of the Beacon project.

"The last time turtles nested at Similajau beaches was in July 2010.

"Last year, 525 green turtle eggs were collected, producing 277 hatchlings which were eventually



The Star
15/12/16
mls-28



Going home: Sarawak Forestry Corporation staff releasing green turtle hatchlings at Similajau National Park.

released into the sea," SFC said.

It added that six green turtle nests were recorded at Similajau's beaches this year, yielding a total of 490 eggs that were all transplanted to the hatchery.

Since 2013, the Beacon project has planted 1,500 reefballs off the coast of Similajau to serve as passive protection and impede trawling activities detrimental to the turtle population.

The presence of the reefballs in the waters off Similajau has greatly reduced trawling activities close to the shore and encouraged the return of turtles to the beaches, SFC said.