

CHINI FOREST RESERVE

# Orang Asli join tree-planting programme

**PEKAN:** The Orang Asli community at Tasik Chini is set to reap the benefits of the country's 100 million tree planting programme as they will get paid for the trees they plant.

In the initial phase, 15 Orang Asli will be involved in planting activities of three different species of high-quality timber trees at the Chini Forest Reserve Area.

Pahang state Forestry Department (East Pahang Zone 1) deputy director Nurfaizliza Kamarulbahrin said the 15 Orang Asli were villagers from Kampung Cendahan, Kampung Tanjung Puput and Kampung Tanjung Sambit in Tasik Chini.

She said as many as 1,080 Merbau and Keruing species of timber trees, including petai trees, would be a source of income for the villagers when the trees bear fruit within seven to 10

years' time.

Nurfaizliza said that the project repurposes an area of about two hectares of land that was illegally cleared for agricultural activities.

"The department provides training and the equipment for the nursery. All they need to do is to find the Merbau tree seedlings and that of a few other species to be sown.

"The saplings that are between 4 and 6 months' old will be purchased by the Forestry Department to be planted in selected areas," she said here on Wednesday.

Nurfaizliza added that the department prepared a special allocation for the rehabilitation and revitalisation of the Chini Forest Reserve.

The replanting activity in the designated area will be carried out in stages.

Nurfaizliza said after Tasik Chini, the Buy Back Guarantee programme would be expanded to Cameron Highlands involving Kampung Terakit and Kampung Rening, which will have 30 participants.

For Khadri Awang, 31, who lives in Kampung Cendahan, Tasik Chini, the tree-planting project at the Chini Forest Reserve will enable the locals to earn more.

"I hope that the tree planting project will continue after this. Apart from helping to restore and rejuvenate the forest reserve, it also allows the Orang Asli community to have an additional source of income.

"We took less than two days to plant about 1,080 Merbau and Keruing saplings, including petai. We are also planning to move more saplings to the hilly area."