

Headline	Fire fighting course to Dprepare folk to respond ast in an emergency		
MediaTitle	The Star (Metro South and East)		
Date	03 May 2016	Color	Full Color
Section	News	Circulation	250,667
Page No	3	Readership	752,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	227 cm <sup>2</sup>
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 3,186
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 9,557



# Fire-fighting course to prepare folk to respond fast in an emergency

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**MUAR:** In view of the current dry and hot weather which increases the possibility of forest fires, the Mukim Ayer Hitam community were given a two-day fire fighting course in the event they are the first responders during an emergency.

Mukim Ayer Hitam village head Mohd Afezan Yahya said the forest in the area is prone to fires so the community has to be prepared to be the first responders when it happens.

During the dry season, tropical peat swamp forests are especially vulnerable to destruction by fire because the soil is extremely flammable when dry.

“We do not want a repeat of the destructive fires that claimed a large part of the forest in 2014.

“The training provided gave us the knowledge and taught us techniques to deal with the fires that could happen anytime, anywhere,” he said.

Apart from putting out fires, the course also educated the community on preventive measures and the dangers of open burning or land clearing, which could lead to forest fires.

The course was part of Coca-Cola’s Water For Life programme in partnership with Yayasan Kemanusiaan Muslim Aid Malaysia, **Forest**

**Research Institute Malaysia** and the Johor Forestry Department.

In conjunction with the International Day of Forests that fell on the day of the fire-fighting course, the participants also planted 500 trees such as the hardy and resistant peat swamp trees ‘kelat paya’ and

‘bintangor’ as part of the programme’s rehabilitation effort.

State Forest Department director Mohd Ridza Awang said that Johor is unique because it has all three types of Malaysian rainforests – dryland, mangrove and peat swamp with the 3,797ha Ayer Hitam Forest Reserve being the only peat swamp forest in the state.

Meanwhile, Coca-Cola Malaysia Public Affairs and Communications director Kadri Taib said that the goal of the project was to create water

reserves in the area by rehabilitating degraded parts of the peat swamp forest to a level where it will hold more water.

He hoped that the efforts would eventually lead to the increase of biodiversity, as peat swamp forests are an important part of the eco-system.

“And because of the degradation in this area, water replenishment is an important part of its conservation that Coca-Cola is hoping to achieve,” he added.



Mohd Ridza taking part in a fire fighting demonstration during the two-day course.