

Pupils help build artificial reef to attract marine life

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Dubai Twelve pupils from the International School of Arts and Sciences (ISAS) took to the cold waters off the shores of Jebel Ali to witness the construction of the artificial reef they have sponsored.

The pupils ranging from 13 to 17 years collected Dh6,000 to help drop 20 concrete reef balls 100 meters off the Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa beach, the first step in building an artificial reef at the resort.

"The aim of this project is to create a diving spot close to the resort and at the same time be able to give back to the community and the environment," said David Thomson, general manager of the resort.

"Recently divers and fishermen have been seeing that the marine life is returning to the area including fish such as hamour [grouper] and eels. These reef balls will simulate underwater rock formations that will attract the fish."

He added that the resort plans to add another 50 reef balls over the next year.

First experience

Some pupils also enjoyed their first scuba diving experience with Al Boom Diving who is handling the project for the resort.

"ISAS has always had an environmental drive and we are continuously looking for projects that care for the environment," says Muhieddine Soubra, principal of the school.

"We have always had plans to build our own reef, but the logistical issues were just overwhelming. We were very excited when Al Boom contacted us and gave us the opportunity to participate," he said.

He added that this has been a great learning experience for the children. "We would like to continue visiting the reef to see how it is progressing. This project will also be a good incentive for the rest of pupils to see how they can help the environment," he said.

"There has been a lot of man-made activity and construction here, but now that the dredging has stopped, it is time to look at rebuilding the marine life here," said Simon Tambling, managing partner of Al Boom Diving who supervised the reef building.

Donations

"Small fish are already gathering around the reef balls as we left. We had great success with this in the reef we built for Le Meridien Al Aqah, it took only three months for the reef to be fully inhabited, there is lots of marine life in that reef now."

"Most of the money donated goes to buying new moulds, as different shapes work for different fish," he explained.

"The moulds are designed in the US but the balls are constructed here by the Lootah Group who have generously donated the concrete and took care of the logistics for us," Tambling said

"Everyone should experience this," said 14-year-old Abdul Rahman Diab, who was trying his hand at scuba diving for the first time.

"All I can say is that it feels amazing. The water in the pool was fine but the sea was very cold, I was nervous at first about the pressure popping my ears but it was fine. I was a bit nervous about the fish though," said the tenth grader who hopes to join his father and cousins on their next diving trip to the US.

By Mohammed N Al Khan

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