

9,000

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The Old Man and the Sea

” Allah knows what I am doing. I do this because I love this world

TENGGU MOHAMAD ALI MANSOR

A 74-year-old Malaysian's quest to rid the country's beaches of washed-up glass led him to amassing a collection of thousands of bottles, now displayed in a colourful seaside museum

AFP

A 74-year-old Malaysian man's quest to rid the country's beaches of washed-up glass led to a collection of thousands of bottles, now displayed in a colourful seaside museum.

For the past 15 years, Tengku Mohamad Ali Mansor has made it his mission to gather bottles washed ashore on Malaysia's rugged South China Sea coast.

He has picked up around 9,000 of them, which he now displays in a traditional wooden house that he has turned into a museum.

They come in various shapes and sizes, from all over the world, stacked across shelves and on the floor -- with an igloo-shaped mound of bottles outside.

He even found messages in two of the bottles, one with a picture of a heart and some faded Chinese characters, and a second that has been torn apart and is no longer legible.

"I did this at first to keep the sea clean," he said from his village of Penarik, where the wooden museum sits next to his home.

"I want to save people from being hurt by broken glass -- and to save the world from being littered with glass."

On a recent morning beach patrol, the spry grandfather of 20 said a Muslim prayer as he stooped to pick up an empty, white-capped bottle.

The ex-soldier wiped it down before slipping it into his backpack -- another one for his collection.

Tengku Ali's obsession began in 2005, when he saw children blowing up empty bottles with fireworks.

Worried the shattered glass could hurt people, he said he would pay them for any bottles they found -- and they returned with over 500.

He then began collecting bottles off beaches. Only later, as his collection grew, did he decide to open a museum.

The site attracts a regular stream of visitors who have read about it on his Facebook page.

During a coronavirus lockdown earlier this year, he kept busy glueing glass shards together to make bottle shapes in a style similar to Japanese "kintsugi", where broken pottery is repaired with lacquer mixed with powdered gold.

"People think I'm crazy, but I don't care," he said.

"Allah knows what I am doing. I do this because I love this world."

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Tengku Mohamad Ali Mansor's obsession of collecting glass bottles on Malaysian beaches began in 2005, when he saw children blowing up empty bottles with fireworks

Malaysian's mission to rid beaches of glass



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