



KERATAN AKHBAR

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'Tagged elephant died from poisoning'

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KOTA KINABALU: The carcass of the female pygmy elephant found on Saturday in Kinabatangan has a satellite collar.

The collar was fixed by researchers for tracking purposes and is attached with the ID "Girang".

Investigations found that the elephant died due to suspected acute poisoning which led to organ failure some time on Nov 14.

No injuries and bullet wounds were found on the body.

Sabah Wildlife Department director Augustine Tuuga, while sharing the preliminary findings, said they first received information from a plantation manager after a worker discovered the carcass in a ditch along a road at the Melangkung Oil Palm Plantations (MOPP) at 5.50am.

"The worker alerted the plantation manager and both of them went to inspect the carcass, which was already emitting a foul smell and several lizards were also seen feeding on it.

"The department went to the scene with the police and several researchers from the Danau Girang Field Centre (DGFC) and non-governmental organisation Hutan," he said in a statement.

Post-mortem results showed that the elephant had severe heart congestion, severe lung congestion, and enlarged and severe liver congestion.

There were also oil palm fronds and sweet potato inside the stomach.

Police have recorded statements from witnesses and samples have been sent to the Chemical Department for analysis.



Another one dead: The female elephant carcass found at the plantation in Kinabatangan. — Pix courtesy of Sabah Wildlife Department

Tuuga said they would also track the movement of the elephant to determine the source of poisoning.

State Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Christina Lew believed the mammal ate something tainted with fertilisers or other chemicals or was deliberately poisoned.

"I am going to call a meeting and brainstorm with the wildlife department. I want them to advise me on the best thing to do to stop or minimise (such incidents)," she said in response to this latest discovery, which is the fourth in two months.

Lew said the state wanted to

declare war against these culprits next year.

She said her ministry was given more allocation under next year's state budget and the money would be used to recruit more rangers as well as communities to assist them.

Meanwhile, DGFC director Dr Benoit Goossens said that based on their tracking data, Girang was moving normally before its death.

He personally did not suspect intentional poisoning because the location where it was found was one of the most elephant-friendly plantations in the state.

"I don't think it was intentional because of where it died. What I

think could be is long-term poisoning in terms of consumption," he said.

Goossens said it was undeniable that elephants in Sabah had been spending more time in plantations over the years.

"What is important is not to point fingers. We need to find out what is going on - whether it's long-term or intentional poisoning, or consumed somewhere outside MOPP.

"If it has anything to do with fertilisers, pesticides or herbicides, we have to do something about it - either stop elephants coming into plantations or stop using these products," he added.