



SURAT KHABAR	:	THE STAR		
TARIKH	:	14/3/2019	MUKA SURAT	: 14
JABATAN	:	KATS / YBM / PERHILITAN		
KLASIFIKASI	:	PERHATIAN		

All out to save Harimau Malaya



Out to catch the poachers: Abdul Kadir flagging off OPS Belang in January.

Watch the video
thestartv.com



Perhilitan to beef up patrols at all poaching hotspots

By SIM LEOI LEOI
 leoi@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: The next two years will be critical for Harimau Malaya's survival in the wild with the launch of an operation by Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan) to monitor known tiger habitats or "hotspots" in its battle against poaching.

This comes even as Perhilitan put in a request for a number of army personnel to beef up their patrols as well as consider a "shoot-on-sight" policy against poachers.

"Ops Belang is a drastic programme to ensure our staff are everywhere - 'boots on the ground' - involving our staff at all levels in ensuring that wildlife is protected.

"The main purpose of Ops Belang is to protect the species of our country's icon - Harimau Malaya - which is now facing a reduction in numbers due to poaching and snares," said its director-general Datuk Abdul Kadir Abu Hashim recently.

Among the activities under Ops Belang are patrols in known tiger habitats, including along timber roads, wildlife trails, along rivers and lakes, and detecting and recording traces of encroachment and poaching as well as destroying the snares.

Kongsi (staff quarters) at logging sites and plantations would also be checked and the number of wildlife recorded in the areas monitored, he said.

"We will have to do this for a minimum of 10 years to see the number of tigers increase in the wild. We are serious about protecting our tigers," he said.

It is estimated that there are currently fewer than 200 tigers in the wild although the two-year National Tiger Survey, undertaken by Perhilitan, is expected to be completed this year.

Ops Belang was launched by Abdul Kadir on Jan 25 involving some 200 staff as a sign of the department's commitment to battling poaching and wildlife crime, especially those involving Harimau Malaya.

It is part of a two-year "Harimau Malaya Kita" campaign by the department under its initiative with the Water, Land and Natural

**Star
 Exclusive**

Resources Ministry to stop the extinction of the species.

In a letter, tiger biologist and MyCat general manager Dr Kae Kawanishi had said that a 2,000-army personnel would be the "minimum" needed to help save the Malayan tiger in the wild.

On July 29, minister Dr Xavier Jayakumar had said it was mulling a shoot-on-sight policy against wildlife poachers to protect Malayan tigers.

On the policy, Abdul Kadir said this was a new approach by the ministry against poaching, which is now taking place in protected areas such as Taman Negara, Taman Negeri Royal Belum and Taman Negara Endau-Rompin.

"However, both the ministry and department will refer to other enforcement agencies as well as explore provisions under the various legislation involved," he said, adding the department welcomed such a policy.

To a question on troops patrolling tiger habitats, Abdul Kadir said this was the model employed by the Nepalese government to reduce poaching which had seen an increase in the number of tigers in that country.

"We are looking to adopting the model. We have put in a request through the ministry to the Defence Ministry," he said.

Asked on the department's request for army backup, he said it might not get the numbers that it had asked for.

"But it would be good if we could get the numbers," said Abdul Kadir, declining however, to reveal the specific number.

"At the same time, we will be focusing on intelligence - the middle men or the mastermind - to know the structure of the syndicate behind the poaching."

He said should the number of tigers fall to fewer than 100 in the wild, it might be difficult for the animals to mate as they become isolated from each other.