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LAST SUMATRAN RHINOS IN WORLD

ALL-OUT EFFORT TO SAVE RHINOS

Indonesia's help sought to fertilise Iman, says Wan Junaidi

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MALAYSIA needs Indonesia's help to impregnate Iman, one of the last remaining Sumatran rhinos in Sabah.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said regional cooperation between Malaysia and Indonesia was crucial to prevent the total extinction of the species.



Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar

“Since the remaining Sumatran rhinos are only found in these two countries, this species can be saved through a programme to produce as many Sumatran rhinos as soon as possible.”

“We are trying to get Indonesia to fertilise our female rhino by

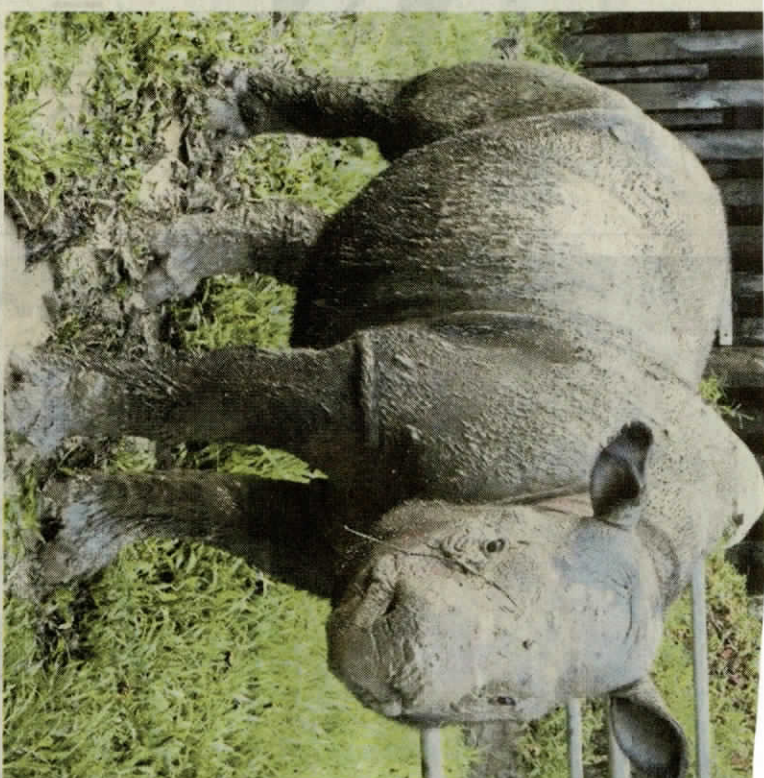
either exchanging healthy rhinos or genetic materials, such as sperm or eggs.

“This can be achieved if they agree to impregnate our female rhino through artificial insemination or in-vitro fertilisation.

“We are discussing some technical details at the moment,” he told the *New Straits Times*.

Wan Junaidi said the Indonesian government had agreed in principle to embark on a transboundary conservation project on Sumatran rhinos as proposed by the Malaysian government. “We have officially written to request a bilateral meeting with Indonesia’s environment and forestry minister to discuss areas of collaboration before experts from both sides can work on it.”

“We hope both governments can initiate the meeting soon. Among the matters that will be



Iman is one of the three remaining Sumatran rhinos in Malaysia. PIC COURTESY OF BORNEO RHINO ALLIANCE

discussed are scientific collaboration, education and research on developing breeding methods for the Sumatran rhino species.

“We will also look into joint efforts in improving the husbandry and conservation of the species, as well as seek arrangements to achieve the success of the Sumatran rhino conservation cooperation.”

The Sumatran rhino was declared extinct in the wild in 2015. According to the Borneo Rhino Alliance, there are fewer than 100 of these critically endangered rhinos left in the world.

Only three captive rhinos are left in Malaysia: Kertam, a middle-aged male rhino and two female rhinos, Puntung and Iman. Sumatran rhinos are the smallest of the living rhinoceroses and the only Asian rhino with two horns.

They are more closely related to the extinct woolly rhinos of the Ice Age.

Wan Junaidi said stringent enforcement would be conducted to combat poaching and encroachment activities.

“Sumatran rhinos have been poached for their horns, which are used in traditional medicine and sold at high prices.

“The rhinos are protected under the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010. Anyone found guilty of hunting, taking or keeping parts of the animal is liable to a fine of between RM100,000 and RM500,000 and also a jail term of up to five years.”

Wan Junaidi assured the public that the ministry, via its Wildlife and National Parks Department, would remain committed to conserving endangered wildlife species in Malaysia.