



KERATAN AKHBAR

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Beefing up prey for the predators

Perhilitan seeks to expand no-hunting zones to conserve wildlife

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PETALING JAYA: There are plans to ban hunting in more areas and cut down on open season for wild boar in a move to conserve wildlife, such as tigers.

The Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan) has put forward these proposals as part of amendments to the Wildlife Conservation (Hunting Prohibited Areas) Order 2013 and Wildlife Conservation (Open Season, Methods and Times of Hunting) Order 2014.

The proposals have been put up for public consultation at the Unified Public Consultation website at upc.mpc.gov.my.

When contacted, both its director-general Datuk Abdul Kadir Hashim and the department confirmed the proposed amendments.

"Perhilitan under the Water, Land and Natural Resources Ministry is conducting a survey on the amendment process for the Wildlife Conservancy Act (Act 716) and wild-

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life conservation order under the supervision of the MPC (Malaysia Productivity Corporation)," said the department.

MPC runs the Unified Public Consultation website.

Under the proposal by Perhilitan, no-hunting zones will be expanded to include all forest reserves listed under the state enactments, water catchment areas and dams.

"Such wildlife habitats are important because they play a role as a place to forage, breed and wander, and as a corridor for wildlife."

"Due to decreasing wildlife population, it is suggested for forest reserves, dams and water catchments to be added to the list of gazetted places where hunting is

banned," said the department in its justification for the amendments.

This, said the department, would allow more room for wildlife, particularly mammals which are prey to the tigers, to better breed.

It said once a permanent forest reserve (Hutan Simpanan Kekal) has been gazetted as a no-hunting zone, no one would be allowed to enter this without permission, except to carry out forestry-related activities allowed under the National Forestry Act 1984 and similar state enactments in Peninsular Malaysia.

"Should the state government, in the future, declare any land as a forest under its state forest enactment, this means that area will automatically be classified as a no-hunting zone," said Perhilitan.

The total number of forests put in the suggested appendix for no-hunting zones are 289 in Peninsular Malaysia, including Kenyir Dam in Terengganu, Bukit Kudu and in Bukit Cheraiah forests in Selangor, and the Muda-Pedu and Ahnging

Dams in Kedah.

"This will help identify and stop poachers who made some of these forests their hunting ground previously," said Perhilitan.

Anyone found flouting the law can be fined up to RM10,000 or jailed up to a year or both.

The department is also proposing to shorten the current year-long open season for wild boars to four months from May 1 until Aug 31.

Based on a comparative study carried out in 12 states in Peninsular Malaysia between 2012 and 2018, a total of 10,642 wild boars were found to be involved in cases of conflict with humans.

"This shows that wild boars breed very quickly in suitable habitats, so they are the main source of food for tigers and other carnivores," it said.

This, it added, would help to increase the population of tigers, which now number fewer than 200 based on the latest findings of the country's First National Tiger Survey carried out in 75% of the

44,000sq km area.

Many experts have advocated the ban on wild boar hunting, which is considered a species of least concern under the IUCN Red Data list, as a way of reviving the local tiger population.

They also point out that the recent increase in cases of wild boar encroachment into housing and urban areas could be due to less tigers or big predators preying on these animals.

Wildlife Conservation Society Malaysia director Dr Melvin Gurnal said if there was no closed season for hunting, the wild boar, as a prey base for tigers, would not have a chance to bounce back in population.

"This is a common biological practice in place in many areas," he said.

Currently, hunting licences for wild boars cost between RM20 (for a month) and RM200 (for a year). Penalties for offences are a fine of up to RM20,000 or jail of up to a year or both.