



## KERATAN AKHBAR

AKHBAR	:	NEW STRAITS TIMES
TARIKH	:	5/10/2019
JABATAN	:	PERHILITAN
KLASIFIKASI	:	PERHATIAN

## WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

## DO MORE TO CURB POACHING

**M**ANY animals are going to be extinct if drastic steps are not taken to address the rampant poaching in the country.

Killing and poaching are also part of wildlife trafficking in countries with high biodiversity like Malaysia.

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime has estimated the global wildlife trafficking industry to be worth between US\$7 billion and US\$23 billion annually (RM28 billion and RM92 billion).

It is unfortunate that a 2016 report by the Wildlife Justice Com-

mission revealed that Kuala Lumpur is the easiest port to illegally transport wildlife.

The report revealed that it costs 50 per cent less to move contraband through Kuala Lumpur International Airport and Kliaz, compared with Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport.

On Sept 25, it was reported that as many as a dozen Malaysian police officers were involved in syndicates smuggling pangolins across the Malaysia-Thailand border.

The report triggered an investigation by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission.

There is an urgent need to re-

view all existing laws, especially legislation pertaining to animal poaching. The government should expedite its plan to amend the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010 to jail poachers for more than 10 years and fine them up to RM5 million.

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) has made a clarion call that without serious action, the critically small population of wildlife such as the Bornean pygmy elephant may suffer the same fate as the Sumatran rhino.

Despite harsher punishments and improved wildlife enforcement under the new act, poaching continues to increase.

SAM believes that this is because of the absence of arrests of the masterminds.

The government should also prosecute those abetting the culprits.

We must take into account the police's recommendation of mandatory whipping for criminals involved in wildlife smuggling, and tighten conditions for the issuance of firearms licences and hunting permits.

The government should strengthen collaboration among the enforcement agencies, including increasing the number of military or police personnel, especially in our forest reserves.

Greater public awareness, better law enforcement and political will are needed to not only prevent poaching and illegal wildlife trade, but also to avoid over-exploitation of natural resources.

Protecting wildlife and our nature's treasure trove not only involves enforcement agencies but requires collaboration across the board.

Efforts to protect our wildlife are also in line with the theme for this year's Earth Day celebration which is "Protect Our Species".

**TAN SRILEE LAM THYE**  
Kuala Lumpur