



KERATAN AKHBAR

SURAT KHABAR	:	THE STAR		
TARIKH	:	30/4/2021	MUKA SURAT	: 17
JABATAN	:	PERHILITAN		
KLASIFIKASI	:	PERHATIAN		

Focus now on endangered species

The Star 30/4/2021 M/S 17

NGO rebrands itself after rhino extinction

By KRISTY INUS
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

KOTA KINABALU: The Borneo Rhino Alliance has rebranded itself to Breeding Our Rare Animals (Bora) as it shifts its focus to the conservation of other endangered wildlife, following the extinction of the Sumatran Rhino in Malaysia.

There are three species on the critical list in this country, namely the Malayan seladang, Malayan tiger and Bornean banteng, said the non-governmental organisation.

"The spotlight will first be on the Bornean banteng or tembedau, deemed the most endangered wildlife species in Sabah after the rhino," said Bora executive director Datuk Dr John Payne.

"After the last rhino died in Malaysia in November 2019, Bora still has a contractual agreement with the Sabah government to develop advanced reproductive technology as a means to prevent the extinction of endangered species.



New target: A Bornean banteng in the wild in Sabah. Inset: Payne.

"This contract is still ongoing - the focus is now on the Bornean banteng, rather than the rhino, and also on cell cultures as a technique that would be important in the future as a means of preserving the living genomes of individual ani-

mals before they die.

"As an organisation, we could have chosen to close down in 2021, but we decided to continue because we learned many lessons from the extinction of the rhino in Malaysia," he said.

Payne said the new name might also be slightly altered in the future.

"Legally, our name remains Borneo Rhino Alliance, but we have provisionally named ourselves as Breeding Our Rare Animals.

"But we see that the word 'breeding' conjures up images of animals in cages. That is not our intent. We are thinking to rebrand as 'bringing back our rare animals'.

"Our immediate plans involve assisting the Sabah Wildlife Department in implementing the Bornean Banteng Action Plan for Sabah," he added.

"Among the lessons that can be learned from Bora's previous work on rhinos was that despite claims by international bodies, poaching, habitat loss and awareness played no part in the extinction of the rhino."

Payne believes that if serious collaborative work had started in the

1980s involving neighbouring Indonesia and the world's best experts, Sumatran rhinos would now be at the beginning of an upwards trajectory towards increasing numbers, via a managed population in enclosures in rainforests.

"Instead, emotions, nationalism, apathy, cognitive biases and waiting for policy decisions that never came are the reasons that the species (Sumatran rhinos) - an ancient genus from the Pleistocene (era) - will soon be totally extinct," he said.

"Therefore, just as with the rhino, Bora does not see either habitat loss or poaching as the most serious contemporary threat to the Bornean banteng."

Payne said that up to a century ago, the wild cattle species would have been common only along the banks and floodplains of large rivers and in areas of hill rice cultivation, but that sort of habitat currently hardly exists in any of the protected areas in Sabah.