



KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

SURAT KHABAR	:	NST			
TARIKH	:	24/9/2021 (JUMAAT)	MUKA SURAT	:	13
JABATAN	:	JPSM			

CONSERVATION COMMITMENT

NST, 24 Sept
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Future generations will benefit from our forests

MALAYSIA is among the world's megadiverse countries, ranking 12th on the National Biodiversity Index.

We are home to tropical forests and critical biodiversity habitats that play a key role in regulating the local temperature, mitigating the effects of climate change, controlling erosion, ensuring food security, and providing clean air and water for our everyday lives.

At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, Malaysia made a commitment to maintain at least half of its total land area under forest cover. Since 2016, 1,859ha of degraded areas in the country have been rehabilitated.

Today, 55.3 per cent, or 18.27 million ha, of the country's land area remains under natural forest cover, higher than countries like the United Kingdom, France and Canada.

Aside from its spectacular landscapes and wildlife, the forest's contributions to society are indispensable. They are fundamental to the livelihoods of *Orang Asal* (indigenous communities) and surrounding communities by providing employment, energy and nutritious food sources.



DATUK ZAHARI IBRAHIM

The forest sector is key in spurring the nation's green economy agenda. Forests are a renewable resource that can be sustainably managed for continuous benefits.

This is reflected in the overall allocation of RM100 million towards environmental conservation in Budget 2021.

As a developing nation, Malaysia faces many challenges in the conservation of forests. Forest fragmentation has long been identified as a serious threat to forest and biodiversity protection, and can bring significant impacts on human health.

Recognising the importance of reconnecting large pieces of natural habitat, the government initiated the Central Forest Spine Master Plan (CFS-MP) in 2009 to link fragmented forest areas

through a network of ecological corridors.

In support of the CFS-MP, the Improving Connectivity: Central Forest Spine (IC-CFS) project was launched in 2014 to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem services in the priority forest landscapes.

Spearheaded by the Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia, the project is a joint effort between the government and the United Nations Development Programme to strengthen institutional capacity and pilot sustainable forest landscape management plans in three tiger-priority landscapes.

The forests in the CFS landscapes provide at least 90 per cent of the population's water supply and are home to the remaining Malaysian tiger and elephant populations.

To date, we have restored and preserved 609ha of habitat in the ecological corridors. A total of 23,735ha of state land within ecological corridors were gazetted Permanent Reserved Forest.

Sustainable forest management (SFM) has been practiced in Malaysia for over a century. Central to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 15, SFM refers to "a dynamic concept that aims to



Forestry officers collecting flowers of the Meranti tree, a tropical hardwood, in Sik, Kedah, so that saplings can be grown. BERNAMA PIC.

maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental values of all types of forests to benefit present and future generations".

In March 2021, the government introduced the Malaysian Forestry Policy to face new challenges at the domestic and international levels.

The inclusive policy takes into account the interests of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, towards achieving sustainable development and sustainable forest management.

Conservation projects such as the CFS-MP and IC-CFS are in line with the Malaysian Forestry Policy as well as the nation's as-

piration to conserve and maintain a rich and healthy forest ecosystem that not only meets the needs of the economy, but more so the needs of the ecology and environment.

We should not take our natural treasures in Malaysia for granted.

Through long-term investment in the forest sector and comprehensive policymaking, we can ensure the continuation of benefits from the forests for future generations.

The writer is national project director of IC-CFS and a deputy director-general at the Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia