

Govt agencies join forces aiming for zero poaching by 2020

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IPOH: The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Malaysia and various government agencies are aiming for a "zero poaching" status for the Belum-Temengor Forest Complex by 2020.

While the focus is primarily on tiger conservation, the group also hopes to ensure other large mammals that are widely traded in the black market would not be hunted by poachers.

WWF Malaysia executive director and chief executive officer Datuk Dr Dionysius Sharma said all agencies also agreed to set up a

secretariat - led by the Perak Economic Planning Unit - to implement action plans related to wildlife poaching and conservation of tigers.

"We need to start with the Belum-Temengor forest first and from there, we will see what's required to enhance our efforts.

"Our security and uniformed units are already working closely with Thai authorities on border patrols," he said.

Drones might also be used for surveillance, Dr Dionysius added.

These were agreed upon at a high-level dialogue that was also attended by Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah.

The agencies present during the talk at Impiana Hotel yesterday included the police, army, Peninsular Malaysia Department of Wildlife and National Parks (Perhilitan), Forestry Department and the Perak State Parks Corporation.

Some of the proposed action plans include increasing patrolling and enforcement efforts; closing up and monitoring unused logging roads; setting up a specialised team to track down poachers, stepping up intelligence on poaching syndicates; and managing tiger habitats adequately.

"We will need more intelligence gathering on poachers and to iden-

tify hotspots for animal activities to increase patrols there," Dr Dionysius said.

He added that a survey conducted last year showed that the tiger population in Malaysian jungles had dwindled by almost half.

"It is estimated that there are between 250 and 340 tigers in Malaysian jungles.

"Their prey - the sambar deer - are also being poached, thus affecting their survival," he said.

Dr Dionysius added that critically endangered species' habitats were in three areas - Belum-Temengor forest, Taman Negara and Endau-Rompin.

At the dialogue, Sultan Nazrin

suggested orang asl be roped in for the zero poaching effort, as they would be most familiar with the jungle.

"They would know the area well. Instead of engaging outsiders, why not utilise the locals?" he said.

Perhilitan director-general Abdul Kadir Abu Hashim said they are looking into increasing the penalty for illegal poachers in the Wildlife Conservation Act.

"The maximum fine is RM/500,000 but we are looking to increase it to RM1m," he said.

"We are also looking to increase the jail term from five to 10 years and include whipping as punishment," he added.

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