



KEMENTERIAN TENAGA DAN SUMBER ASLI

KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

SURAT KHABAR	:	THE SUN – Speak Up			
TARIKH	:	27/7/2021 (SELASA)	MUKA SURAT	:	9
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COMMENT

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It takes a nation to save our tigers

AS we approach Global Tiger Day on Thursday, it begs the question – have we done enough to protect our Malayan tigers? Despite our efforts to protect our national treasure, they are still on the brink of extinction and the onus continues to be upon us to reverse their decline.

Tigers are an umbrella species. By protecting them we protect the forest habitats in which they live, the biodiversity and the food chain that supports them, which in turn secures the eco-services and natural resources that we rely on. However, poaching and widespread habitat loss and fragmentation due to human population growth are still causing the tiger's rapid decline.

To stamp out poaching and snaring, WWF-Malaysia (World Wildlife Fund) is supported by corporate partners, including Procter & Gamble (P&G). The collaboration is centred on protecting the Malayan tigers within the Central Forest Spine in Peninsular Malaysia through patrolling efforts by indigenous community rangers in the Belum-Temengor Forest Complex.

Forests in Malaysia often share common borders with agricultural

land. Even though the government has established protected areas and forest reserves in Peninsular Malaysia, many of these forests are fragmented. Large mammals such as the Malayan tiger, Asian elephant and tapir need connected forests to roam and forage for food. As many of our forest blocks are isolated, this causes inbreeding among wildlife, resulting in lack of genetic diversity and bringing about local extinction.

Forest fragmentation also causes human-wildlife conflict. Species like tigers trapped within the smaller blocks of forests get into close contact with human activities at the edge of the forest. Livestock then becomes prey to the apex predator.

To prevent this, we need to identify and establish wildlife corridors to reconnect the forest blocks. Over time, a network of interconnected forests could be established, allowing wildlife populations to move from place to place to breed, maintaining their genetic variation and health.

It is crucial that agricultural activities and natural forest habitats can co-exist in harmony, enabling economic development without

negatively impacting the health of adjacent and nearby forests.

In some cases, agricultural lands located in between forest blocks have the potential to serve as wildlife corridors for species to move between the fragmented forests. For plantation owners, what this means is to set aside a part of their land for connectivity or as a wildlife corridor. This corridor will function to connect forest patches and improve habitats for plants and animals.

To prevent the continued loss of our tigers, we must prevent further deforestation. The clearing of forests for agriculture and plantations, as well as infrastructure development, with poor planning and lack of compliance to environmental policies pose a serious threat to the habitats of endangered species in Malaysia. For every project, proper planning and approval processes need to be put in place and, more importantly, be transparent.

All these work to protect the tigers and their habitats requires a comprehensive framework. Based on the three pillars of WWF's Living Landscape – protecting forest and wildlife habitat; producing palm oil



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in a sustainable manner; and restoring degraded areas as wildlife corridors – human needs and nature conservation can co-exist.

In order to make this integrated approach possible, we need to work with all stakeholders to ensure the continuous conservation and enhancement of our natural environment.

Specific to the WWF-P&G collaboration, field assessments along key ecological corridors provide the data to have them accorded protected area status. Forest restoration on degraded areas

at critical ecological corridors reconnect the fragmented forest and facilitate the movement of tigers and other species.

Protecting the Malayan tiger requires the involvement of all stakeholders and an integrated approach which addresses the key issues that are driving their decline.

We must work together now, before it is too late for these majestic creatures.

WWF-Malaysia

Comments:

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