



KERATAN AKHBAR

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Killing the mood for love

Mating habits of gibbons disrupted by the threat to their habitat

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KOTA TINGGI: A gravel road to some plantations and dairy farms here has encroached into the habitat of endangered gibbon families, disrupting their mating pattern as well. These displaced animals, which often swing on trees, have now come out to the edge of the road, calling out to their mates especially during the mating season.

Johor Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) vice-president Vincent Chow estimated that about 60 gibbons were affected.

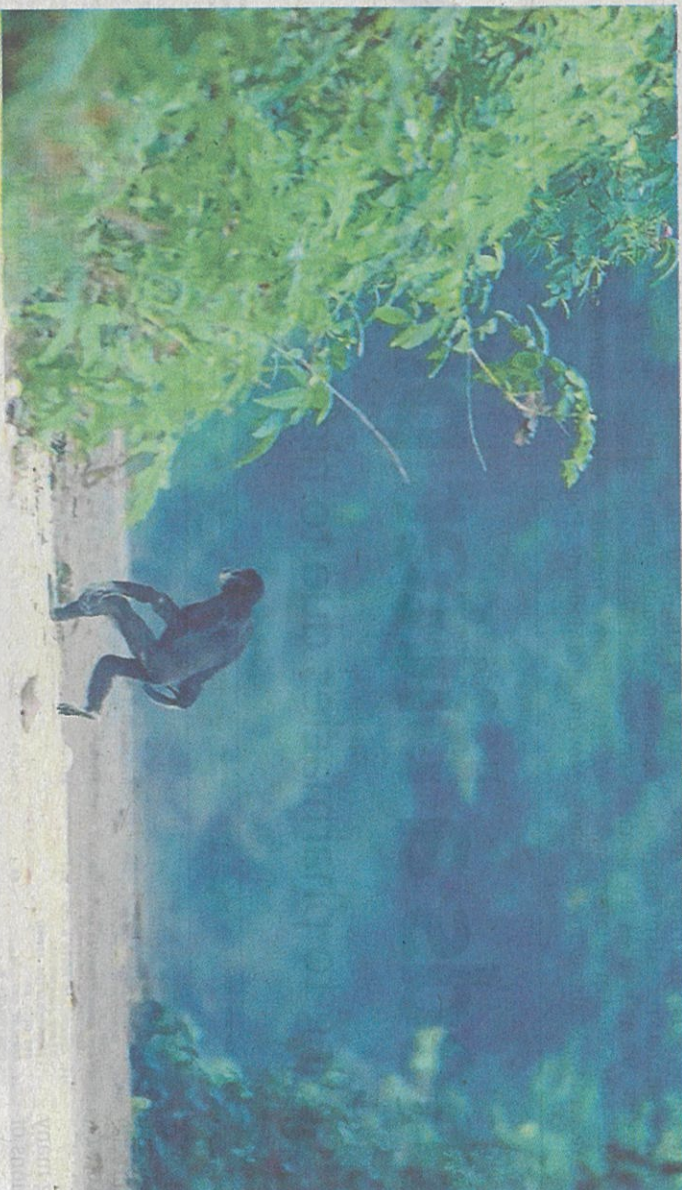
Chow said that one MNS member Gautam Krishnan managed to capture a picture of a gibbon trying to walk across the road like a human.

"It was a slow and painful experience for the animal. They would usually swing from tree to tree," he said. He explained that white-hand gibbons were tree dwellers and hardly come to the ground.

Chow said that MNS discovered the displaced gibbons during a one-year scientific study at the Pantli Bird Sanctuary.

"This gravel road is located about 8km north of Kota Tinggi. So when the trees were cut to make way for the road about two years ago, many gibbon families were displaced," he said.

MNS and a plantation company,



Out of their element: A gibbon trying to cross a gravel road located about 8km north of Kota Tinggi. — Picture courtesy of Gautam Krishnan of the Johor Malaysian Nature Society

which is providing the financial sponsorship, are now planning to put up ropes along the gravel road as a way to help the gibbons.

The "suspended walkway" measuring at least 500m each will be the first of its kind in the state.

The ropes will be placed at three different locations along the road.

Chow said that he was grateful for the plantation company's willingness to sponsor the project

which would cost at least RM15,000 for each location.

They hoped to start work on the project soon, he added.

"We are using ropes instead of cables as we do not want the animals to injure themselves," he said, adding that gibbons travelled in small groups of five to six.

The primate, also known as lar gibbon, is an endangered animal in the gibbon family.

Their habitat has been threatened by forest clearance for the construction of roads, agriculture, ecotourism, illegal logging, new village settlement and oil plantations, among others.

Asked about the scientific study, Chow said that they hoped to complete it by March next year.

It is meant to document the richness of the Pantli area, which comprises an area of about 1,800ha.