



KERATAN AKHBAR
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# NGO buys land for wildlife corridor

## Sabah to gazette 31.87ha parcel in Kinabatangan as a reserve

**KOTA KINABALU:** The Rhino and Forest Fund (RFF) has bought 31.87ha of oil palm land near the Tabin wildlife forest reserve for conversion into a wildlife corridor and conservation area.

The four parcels of land at Sg Tabin Segama in Kinabatangan district will be handed over to the Sabah government and gazetted as wildlife forest reserve where RFF will build an 800m wildlife corridor.

This is not the first time the German-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) has acquired land with the aim of creating habitat connectivity between the wildlife reserves of Tabin and Kulamba.

"Buying alienated land is the last resort, as previously, we would only identify state land that could be converted for conservation purposes.

"The long term plan is to expand the wildlife forest corridor towards Silabukan and Segama and other areas through more land acquisitions.

"We hope to inspire other parties to do the same," said RFF executive director Robert Risch during the agreement signing ceremony yesterday.

Since 2017, RFF has purchased 33.64ha of land in the Sg Tabin and lower Kinabatangan area, with the latest purchase bringing the total to 65.51ha.

He added that between 2011 and 2017, RFF and local authorities have worked together to convert and protect more than 2,300ha of endangered forest in the Tabin-Kulamba wildlife corridor project area.

He said the wildlife corridor would include grassland patches and fruit trees to serve as a "wildlife oasis" aimed at attracting different wildlife to use the corridor.

Risch believes the survival of several species such as the Bornean Banteng, Storm's Stork, Helmeted Hornbill, Hairy-nosed Otter and Bornean pygmy elephants is dependent on the re-establishment of habitat connectivity between Tabin and Kulamba.

Meanwhile Sabah Chief Conservator of Forests Datuk Mashor Mohd Jaini said critical areas for expansion of the wildlife corridor, such as for elephant routes from northern Kalimantan to Sandakan, must be identified.

"We are aiming for 30% of state land as protected areas by 2025. It is now 26%," he said.