



KERATAN AKHBAR

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Out to protect the elephants

Sabah's action plan will have more bite against offenders

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KOTA KINABALU: The state Elephant Conservation Action Plan 2020-2030 is expected to include clauses that will see plantation workers and owners held accountable for hurting and killing elephants within their orchards.

While the Federal Government is looking at amending laws to impose stricter punishment on crimes against wildlife, the Sabah government hopes the guidelines will push the plantation industry to do more to protect wild animals.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Christina Liew, who previously announced the action plan, said the draft was completed and she was hoping to present it to the state government soon.

"We need them to understand you do not kill wildlife. Even when they come to your plantation or orchard, you do not kill them."

"You can put up fences or call the nearest of the 14 stations where 60 rangers are assigned all over Sabah. Tell them you sighted an elephant coming onto your farm land," said Liew, who is state Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister. She said this during the Sabah Masters Gold Championship 2019 press conference yesterday.

Liew said the authorities were considering amending the state's 1997 Wildlife Conservation Enactment as "it may not be good enough since the culprits involved in killing elephants are undeterred by the jail term".



Loving care: A wildlife official comforting a baby elephant at an oil palm plantation in Kinabatangan before it was moved to a sanctuary. — Bernama

She added that concern over elephant deaths was raised during the World Travel Market (WTM) three-day event in London last week.

"I think there were one or two industry players who raised the issue of the pygmy elephants, and we explained to them our Wildlife Department in Sabah and state government were doing their best and going all out, trying different ways to manage the situation."

"We needed to explain this because they received some negative (reports)," she said.

In relation to that Liew said the state was trying to increase the number of European travellers besides continuing promotional efforts for the Chinese and South Korean markets.

Meanwhile, Tourism Malaysia chairman Datuk Ahmad Shah Hussein Tambakau said participat-

ing in the WTM was part of the efforts to achieve the targeted 30 million tourist arrivals for Visit Malaysia Year 2020.

"We are very happy with the response there. Besides Sabah, we also promoted other states in Malaysia and we are looking to bring in more tourists from the Middle East with a memorandum of understanding signed with Ethad Airways during the event," he said.