



KERATAN AKHBAR

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Perhilitan's cybercrime unit monitoring Internet

JOHOR BARU: The Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan) is monitoring illegal transactions of animal trade on the Internet and social media via a specially formed unit, says Johor Perhilitan director Salman Saaban.

"Wildlife cybercrime is now a new phenomenon for illegal animal trade in Malaysia. The department formed a cybercrime unit in 2014, which aimed to monitor and stop such activities," he said.

Salman was responding to *The Star's* queries on a Facebook group, whose administrator is believed to be based in Johor, found selling accessories and animal parts.

He warned that those caught selling, buying or even possessing animal parts without a permit could face action under the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010.



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Salman Saaban



Salman thanked *The Star* for highlighting the Facebook page and said Perhilitan would investigate the report immediately.

Perhilitan has proposed to make advertising of exotic pets online an offence under amendments to the Act. Currently, action can only be taken against those who are caught red-handed smuggling the animals or if the animals are found on their premises.

According to the Water, Land and Natural Resources Ministry, the Bill on the amendments is expected to be tabled by the end of this year's Parliament meeting or the first meeting of next year.

Figures provided by Perhilitan to the Malaysian government's open data website indicated that the number of its enforcement operations has increased by over 300% from 221 in 2013 to 890 in 2018.

The majority of the operations were focused on snares (355) that were usually set up in forests by poachers, as well as those against commercial enterprises (396).

Data from Perhilitan also showed that the number of wildlife offences had increased more than two fold from 3,733 cases in 2012 to 7,788 cases in 2018. Most of these cases involved illegally keeping or using wildlife (3,733), smuggling (251) and others (3,623).