



KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

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CASES of poaching in the Belum-Temenggor forest complex continue to be low during the movement control order.

This is according to the Perak State Park Corporation and WWF-Malaysia, which monitor the largest continuous forest complex in Peninsular Malaysia, located in Perak and stretches to southern Thailand.

WWF-Malaysia says it conducts extensive patrols in Belum-Temenggor and the occurrence of snares in the forest has remained consistently low compared to recent years.

"In the beginning of 2018, when we intensively patrolled the forest, the occurrence of snares dropped by 98%.

"This observation remains so during the MCO period.

"Our experience tells us that intensive patrols do deter poachers from our forest," shares the environmental organisation.

Concurring, Perak State Park Corporation director Mohamed Shah Redza Hussein says poaching activities in the Royal Belum State Park has been on a decline since 2019 until today.

"In 2020, there were only two incidents on the usage of live snares and traps," he tells *Sunday Star*.

He says the decrease is due to more frequent patrolling and better collaborations with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the creation of an Orang Asli wildlife patrolling team.

The MCO had played a part as well, since the poaching syndi-

Poaching cases remain low in Belum-Temenggor forest

cates who normally travel by road would have faced more road-blocks.

He highlights that it is crucial to prevent poaching, especially with the Malayan tiger being a critically endangered species and only exists in Peninsular Malaysia.

"Their numbers are critically low.

"If we do not stop the poaching numbers from going down, the Malayan tiger population will be unviable and cannot repopulate in the wild.

"This will lead them to be extinct in a few years. The whole world is watching on how Malaysia is protecting this iconic global species," he stresses.

To date, there are less than 200 left in the wild today.

Commending Perhilitan's plan to increase enforcement efforts, WWF-Malaysia says patrolling within wildlife habitats needs to be increased so that wildlife is not poached in the first place.

"With a fund of RM20mil provided under the Budget 2021, Perhilitan has recently hired more than 500 patrollers to intensify the effort to combat wildlife crime.

"We call on the government to continue providing the budget on an annual basis, as well as over

the long-term," it urges.

WWF-Malaysia also suggests that the government includes citizen science as an alternative system, allowing the public to do their part in combating wildlife crimes.

"They can report to the authorities on suspected wildlife crimes such as selling exotic meat and wildlife parts, and traditional Chinese medicine which claims to contain derivatives from wildlife," it says.

The organisation also points out that laws related to cybercrime are needed to enable enforcement authorities to act against the online sale of items related to wildlife.

"At the minimum, online shopping channels need to have codes of conduct to ban wildlife related items on their webpage.

"For example, last year, an e-commerce site banned a Terengganu turtle egg merchant and blacklisted turtle eggs completely after Twitter users highlighted the sale of the controversial product on its platform," WWF-Malaysia illustrates.

In theory, it says movement restriction orders by the government should reduce the chance of poachers travelling interstate or

Crimes against wildlife

Below is a comparison of cases recorded by Perhilitan from 2019 to 2021, within the period between January and April of each year

	2019	2020	2021
Illegally keeping wildlife	34	20	39
Smuggling wildlife	6	6	3
Acts of cruelty against wildlife	2	2	0
Illegal hunting	1	4	0
Illegal trading	0	0	1
Encroachment on protected areas	1	3	1
Conflicts involving a zoo	1	0	0
Total cases	45	35	44

Source: Department of Wildlife and National Parks (Perhilitan) *TheStar* graphics

over distances to carry out their activities.

"However, it is still possible for poaching to happen on a localised level, where movements are not restricted as much," it adds.

WWF-Malaysia hopes that the

public will do their part in keeping wildlife safe in their natural habitats in the forests, rivers or the sea.

"Do not buy wildlife meat or any animal parts, or keep wildlife as pets," it urges.

