



KERATAN AKHBAR

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NATURE CONSERVATION

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Sabah Forestry Dept committed to restoring mangrove land

KOTA KINABALU: The wetlands in Sabah are still susceptible to man-made and natural threats, with more than 3,300ha in need of restoration.

According to a 2017 study, Sabah had about 378,195ha of mangroves, which covered about 60 per cent of total mangrove areas in the country.

In Sabah, 93 per cent of those mangrove areas are forest reserves. However, the state lost 8.5 per cent of the mangrove areas to degradation.

Sabah Forest Department's deputy chief conservator of forests (research and development) Dr Robert Ong said in 2012, an assessment was made and they found that 3,300 hectares of mangrove land required some form of restoration.

"(The degradation) is not only happening in Sabah but it is common where there are mangroves.

"The drivers to the degradation include agriculture, aquaculture, settlements and poaching," he said while presenting on the "Conservation of Wetlands in Sabah for the Last Two Decades"

during yesterday's 4th International Symposium on Conservation and Management of Wetlands.

He added that other factors that contributed to the degradation included road construction, which could disrupt the hydrology and mangrove ecosystem.

"There were also 22 cases of tengar (a species of mangrove) poaching since 2010, and 52 people were arrested.

"It is not something new, but over the last few years it has become more frequent," he said.

Apart from that, researchers would also study the socio-economic factors among the people living along the mangrove areas.

As for peat swamp, with the largest areas located in the Klias peninsula and Sugut, both were badly destroyed by forest fires during the 1998 El Nino.

Ong added that the department would also pursue legislation related to jurisdictional authority within mangrove areas.

On the department's achievements, he said 1,790ha of mangroves had been replanted for



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restoration purposes since 2006. Sabah had also acquired the Ramsar status for the Lower Kinabatangan and Segama wetlands in 2008 and another for the Kota Kinabalu Wetland in 2018. A Ramsar site is a wetland site

designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. The federal government had allocated RM13.82 million for the Lower Kinabatangan Segama wetlands in the 10th and 11th

Malaysia Plans between 2011 and 2020. The Klias Peat Swamp conservation project, meanwhile, received an allocation RM11.89 million in the 8th to 11th Malaysia Plans.