



KERATAN AKHBAR

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Sabah committed to helping wild elephants survive

KOTA KINABALU: Sabah said it is committed to provide a sustainable landscape to boost and conserve the population of wild elephants in the state.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal said to save the pachyderms, all stakeholders would have to learn to co-exist with the endangered species.

Sabah recorded 145 elephant casualties between 2010 and this year, whereby most were killed in palm oil plantations and forest reserves.

"Around half of the elephant deaths were caused by firearms or poisoning, while quite a number remain unsolved.

"I sincerely believe that this meeting is the perfect venue to openly discuss and to look for pragmatic solutions to address this escalating mortality in Sabah's elephant population," Shafie said.

He said this during the opening of the 10th IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist group (AsESG) meeting held for the first time here yesterday.

His speech was read out by his deputy, Datuk Christina Liew, who is also state tourism, culture and environment minister.



Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal

"Maybe we need to accept the fact that, in reality, the elephants were here first and it is us humans who are trespassers. Thus, the time has come for us to realise the fact that we must treat elephants with humility and respect.

"Through land sparing and sharing, we must start coexisting with our Bornean elephants," he said.

Present was Assistant Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Assafal Alian and permanent secretary Datuk William Baya, state wildlife director Augustine Tuga and AsESG chairman Vivek Menon.

The three-day meeting, which began on Wednesday, saw 175 participants comprising AeESG members, government officials from 13 Asian elephant range countries, as well as representatives from nine "non-elephant" countries.