



KERATAN AKHBAR
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## Sabah to gazette forest as protected area for orang utan population

**KOTA KINABALU:** The Sabah Forestry Department is moving to gazette a forest in central Sabah, rich in orang utan population, as a fully protected area.

The move comes in the wake of a sudden change in the ownership of the 101,000ha Forest Management Unit 5 (FMU 5), which also contains 13,000ha of flora and fauna.

Sabah Forests chief conservator Datuk Sam Mannan said the area was being classified as a first-class reserve and would become part of the Trusmi Forest Reserve.

FMU 5, owned by logging and reforestation company Anika Desiran, was bought over by a local wood products manufacturing company, Priceworth International,

for RM260m in October last year. Anika Desiran was apparently working with conservationists, including WWF Malaysia, during the past two to three years.

The goal was to create a model example of a conservation economy and the sudden sale of the property took the conservationists by surprise.

Mannan said the forest region had been logged a few times since the 1980s and that the Forestry Department allowed it to be parcelled out under the FMU programme in 1997 because it did not expect orang utan to inhabit such highland areas.

"I don't know why the former owner sold it. But it has nothing to

do with us," he said. He said that a WWF study found orang utan in FMU 5 so the high-conservation area within it would be turned into a first-class reserve.

Once done, the new owner will have to provide a development masterplan which must be approved before any kind of work can take place on the land.