



KERATAN AKHBAR

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Safer passage for wildlife in Sabah

Japanese donors buy RM4.6mil worth of land to act as forest corridor

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KOTA KINABALU: It will be a safer passage for wildlife in Lower Kinabatangan with Japanese donors buying up 94ha of land to act as a corridor to link the fragmented forests.

The Kinabatangan-based Borneo Conservation Trust (BCT) will rehabilitate the area for the forest corridor which will enable wildlife, particularly elephants, to move between the fragmented forests without encroaching on private farms and plantations.

The Japanese donors, led by Saraya Co Ltd president Yasuke Saraya, handed over the land titles worth RM4.6mil to Sabah Wildlife Department director Augustine Tuuga during a ceremony on Tuesday, witnessed by Chief Minister Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal and his

deputy Datuk Christina Liew, who is also state Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister.

Welcoming the gesture of the Japanese donors, Shafie said everyone had a role to play in conserving Sabah's iconic wildlife.

He also called on villagers, farmers and plantation workers not to harm wild animals that encroached on their land.

"It is not a licence to kill just because they encroach on your area," he said, adding that they should seek the Wildlife Department's help to chase the animals away.

Shafie said the threat of wildlife destroying crops was not as bad as environmental damage caused by humans.

The state government, he added, was drawing up clear-cut policies on conservation such as reducing logging by stopping exports as part of its overall conservation effort.

"Stopping log exports has an effect on our revenue, but we are prioritising the conservation of our natural resources," he added.

Liew, meanwhile, said the Japanese donors' move complemented other international community efforts such as the buying of 131ha of land critical for the movement of wildlife in Lower Kinabatangan through funds raised by the UK-based World Land Trust.

BCT Sabah chairman Datuk Laurentius Ambu said there was still a need to acquire 325ha of land to serve as a wildlife corridor to link the forests.

Conservationists hope that such corridors will help reduce wildlife-human conflicts.

Plans for the corridor may also include planting of fruit trees (food corridor) for the animals to ensure that they do not stray into human settlements.

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