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Shoot-on-sight policy mulled

Minister: Move to stop poachers and save tigers drastic but needed

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KUALA LUMPUR: A shoot-on-sight policy against wildlife poachers is being mulled in a move to protect Malayan tigers.

Water, Land and Natural Resources Minister Dr Xavier Jayakumar said he was considering bringing such a policy for Cabinet review.

"It might sound a bit drastic but if you want to save Malayan tigers, we have to take drastic action as well.

"Such a policy, instituted in Nepal and Bhutan, has seen the number of tigers rising," he said after attending the Global Tiger Day 2018 celebrations organised by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Malaysia yesterday.

Dr Xavier said he would instruct ministry officials to immediately convene a meeting between the army, police, Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan), as well as Maybank Foundation and WWF Malaysia to come up with concerted action plans.

Perhilitan director-general Datuk Abdul Kadir Abu Hashim said a large part of the threat to tigers and Malaysian wildlife came from poaching snares.

"Today, we can remove one but one month later, these snares are back at the same place.

"They don't discriminate and will catch anything, not just tigers," Abdul Kadir said.

According to its statistics, more than 2,890 snares were destroyed in 479 operations conducted from 2014 up to this year.

During the event, WWF Malaysia also officially announced Project Stampede, a joint effort involving orang asli communities to patrol the Belum-Temenggor Forest Complex in Perak to remove poacher snares, as well as collect data.

There was also a screening of *On the Brink of Extinction*, a documen-



Jumbo operation: Combination photos showing Lasah being moved from his old place on Langkawi island to the Kuala Gandah elephant sanctuary in Pahang.

tary narrated by six individuals working with WWF Malaysia on tiger conservation.

Dr Mark Rayan Darmaraj, WWF Malaysia's tiger lead researcher and one of the film's narrators, said the patrols would serve as "eyes and ears" for enforcement authorities and help to put a stop to poaching.

Currently, he said, the project had a few patrol teams, with an aim to roll out 10 teams by the end of the year.

"The Belum-Temenggor forest,

which includes the Royal Belum state park, is one of three tiger priority sites in Peninsular Malaysia but it had seen a 50% drop in tigers' population there.

"At most, we are buying time, as without specialised and armed tactical teams with enforcement powers to respond and quickly track down these poachers, we will lose the fight," he said.

Currently, Malaysia is conducting its first-ever National Tiger Survey, expected to be completed by 2020.

Separately, Lasah, a 37-year-old male Asian elephant, has been relocated to the Kuala Gandah National Elephant Conservation Centre.

Together with him, a Malayan tiger named Zanah, was also moved to the National Wildlife Rescue Centre in Sungkai.

Both animals were handed to Perhilitan to be transferred out because the company - Langkawi Elephant Adventures - was unable to carry on its operations at its premises.