



KERATAN AKHBAR

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Take immediate action to conserve wildlife

THE revelation by police that VIPs or prominent figures are involved in illegal hunting and poaching of wildlife, including endangered species, shows how serious the problem is and why drastic measures are needed to deal with the individuals and syndicates concerned.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Bador was quoted as saying that police had to take a firm stance against poachers, including considering shoot-to-kill orders, to show the authorities' seriousness in curbing poaching, illegal hunting and wildlife smuggling.

Such drastic action is justified and deserves the support of the public. We must also support the proposal for stricter penalties, including mandatory caning for those convicted of poaching.

Countries with a high biodiversity like Malaysia are the source, transit areas and hubs for smuggled species. The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime has estimated that

Protecting wildlife and our nature's treasure trove requires collaboration across NGOs, government, corporate stakeholders and local communities.

the global wildlife trafficking industry is worth between US\$7bil and US\$23bil (RM28bil and RM92bil) annually.

A 2016 report by the Wildlife Justice Commission revealed that Kuala Lumpur is the easiest port to move illegal wildlife. The report also revealed that it costs traffickers 50% less to move contraband

through the Kuala Lumpur International Airport and KLIA2 compared with Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport.

The government should expedite its plan to amend the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010 to imprison poachers for more than 10 years and fine them up to RM5mil upon conviction. It is timely in view of the rampant poaching cases that threaten our protected species.

The government should also consider mandatory imprisonment not only for poachers but also those abetting the culprits, including the VIPs.

We must also take into account the police's recommendation for mandatory whipping for criminals involved in wildlife smuggling, and tighten conditions for the issuance of firearms licences and hunting permits.

As for enforcement of the law, the government should strengthen

collaboration among the enforcement agencies and increase the number of military or police personnel on the ground to check and prevent poaching activities.

Greater public awareness, better law enforcement and political will are needed to not only curb poaching activities and illegal wildlife trade, but also to prevent over-exploitation of natural resources.

Protecting wildlife and our nature's treasure trove requires collaboration across NGOs, government, corporate stakeholders and local communities.

We must take immediate action to help conserve our biodiversity, which includes more than 15,000 species of flowering plants, 1,500 species of terrestrial vertebrates, and about 150,000 species of invertebrates.

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