



KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

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Third hippo birth at wetland sanctuary

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A HIPPOPOTAMUS calf is now the centre of attention at the Paya Indah Wetland Park.

It is the offspring of Cendana, a 20-year-old cow, and Baby, a bull 12 years her junior.

Footage on the Wildlife Department (Perhilitan) social media page shows a healthy calf toddling out of the hippopotamus enclosure with its mother.

Though it is yet to be named, rangers have taken to calling it "Comel", meaning cute in Malay, for its adorable characteristics.

In one part of the footage, the calf can be seen tripping over a step too deep for its short, stout legs.

Rangers are confident, however, that with its healthy appetite and growth, the step will no longer be a problem for it.

According to park superintendent Suhainah Fejalis, this is the

third hippopotamus birth at the man-made wetland sanctuary and the second calf from Cendana.

Cendana gave birth to her first calf, Lily, in 2011 as a result of her union with Kundra, a bull that died in 2016.

Kundra and Juwita, another cow, produced Baby in 2013. Kundra, Juwita and Cendana were presented to the park by the Botswana government in 2001.

According to Perhilitan officials, Kundra's death left Baby as the only rose among the thorns. As a result, there was fierce competition for Baby's attention between Cendana and Lily.

To prevent the cows from fighting, only one was allowed out from its enclosure at a time.

"Despite her age, Cendana went through the eight months of pregnancy without complications.

"She was observed daily and given an ample diet of napier grass, fruits and vitamin supplements.



The hippopotamus calf at Paya Indah Wetland Park with its mother, Cendana.

"The rangers were given strict instructions to report any abnormalities to the vet immediately.

"As hippopotamuses give birth in water, we were not able to observe the moment of birth but we knew a day before when she was due from her restless movements and lack of appetite," said Suhainah.

She described the calf's arrival — which weighed around 50kg at birth — as one that gave rise to mixed feelings, both worry and joy.

"We were most anxious whether the newborn would be trampled by its mother in the beginning," said Suhainah.

But Cendana's human caretakers need not have worried as she seems to be coping well taking care of her offspring.

"The calf is always by her side and she is teaching it how to eat, move and swim.

"Though it is still suckling, it has developed a penchant for banana, papaya and watermelon, which are also Cendana's favourite food.

"For now, the daily routine for mother and calf is to submerge themselves in the park's lake the whole day, right after breakfast.

"One of the cutest things to see is when the calf tries to climb onto its mother's back," said Suhainah.

For now, Suhainah said the calf would be a permanent resident at the wetland park. Observation on mother and calf will be carried out as inconspicuously as possible to minimise disturbance.

Perhilitan will be fully responsible for its care and future well-being and members of the public who wish to meet the wetland park's latest addition will have to wait until the lockdown is lifted.

Watch the video
TheStarTV.com

