



KERATAN AKHBAR

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Tiger Platoon to help hunt wildlife poachers

KOTA KINABALU: The police Tiger Platoon will be the frontliners in assisting Sabah's wildlife rangers in its war against wildlife poachers and traffickers, says Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Bador.

The platoon under the General Operations Force will be deployed for patrols with Sabah Wildlife Department and Sabah Forestry Department rangers to act against wildlife poachers, he added.

"This is a declaration of war against wildlife criminals," he told reporters after giving out certificates of appreciation to 16 personnel at the 14th Battalion of the General Operations Force in Tawau on Monday.

He said he had given the order for all five GOF battalions in Sabah, as well as those in Sarawak, to go all out in their fight against poachers and those trafficking in wildlife.

"We are seeing success in peninsular Malaysia through the arrests of foreign nationals (Cambodian, Thai and Vietnamese) and locals with the deployment of the Senoi Praaq elite squad (under two GOF battalions) to assist Perhilitan and the Forestry Department to catch illegal poachers," he said.

"The police are now working with the prosecution to ensure that the cases are strong and the criminals receive the necessary punishment as provided under the law," he added.

Sabah Wildlife Department is grappling with poaching and trafficking of its wildlife amid recent deaths of three endangered Bornean pygmy elephants in the last five weeks.

Separately, Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Abdul said stronger enforcement is needed in battling wildlife crimes to avoid

ill-repute befalling the palm oil industry.

He said there might be parties who are quick to blame commodity players when there are incidents like the recent deaths of elephants.

Commenting on the latest jumbo death, he said: "I am aware but I have not gotten the full details ... So let us wait."

"But there is a need for revamp in enforcement.

"We also need to engage small scale planters and farmers, and not just large plantations (in managing this situation)," he said when asked if there is a need to revamp Sabah's conservation efforts.

Speaking to reporters after a state level public sector innovation award ceremony on Monday, Shafie said if the situation worsens, the implication will not only affect plantations here but also the image of the whole country.

"I appreciate the statement by the Inspector General of Police that they want to increase enforcement (in combating wildlife trade and poaching)," he said.

Palm oil plantations, which contribute to deforestation, have long been blamed for wildlife losing their habitats.

In the past, there were plantation workers involved in killing wildlife like elephants or putting traps to prevent the animals from destroying the crops.

Shafie, who received a courtesy call from outgoing State Secretary Datuk Hashim Pailan earlier, said he would announce the new State Secretary on Wednesday after the State cabinet meeting.

Pailan officially completed his tenure on Friday based on mandatory retirement at 60, after serving in the post since July 9 last year.