

Symposium on wise management of wetlands

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PETALING JAYA, Tues: An Asian wetland symposium will be held from Aug 27 to 30 in Penang to ensure and promote the wise use or sustainable development of wetlands which are among the most valuable ecosystems in the world.

Much of the resources and biodiversity of wetlands, which comprise rivers, lakes, mangroves or any body of water, supports Asia's large population but overexploitation of wetland resources have led to their depletion.

Participants of the four-day symposium will have the chance to share their experience and specialised knowledge of good practices in wetlands management with experts from all over Asia, who will be presenting papers on the subject.

The participants will also gain first-hand experience of managing a Malaysian wetland through field excursions to wetlands in north of Peninsular Malaysia.

One of the wetlands they will visit is the world-renowned Kuala Gula Bird Sanctuary in Perak.

Covering 40,000 ha of the Matang Forest Reserve, Kuala Gula consists

of vast stretches of tidal mudflats and mangroves with a research house erected in the middle of the sea for avid bird watchers from as far as Australia, Europe and Japan.

The National Parks and Wildlife Protection Department have surveyed about 166 species of emigrating birds here, including the globally-threatened Milky Stork, Black-crowned Night Herons, woodpeckers, Long-tailed Night Jars and many more.

The sanctuary is also home to other animals like the smooth otter, dusky leaf monkey, long-tailed macaque, leopard and ridge-back dolphin.

Its richness in biodiversity has given the Kuala Gula Sanctuary acclamation as the best managed mangrove forest in the world.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to open the symposium, organised by Universiti Sains Malaysia, Wetlands International and Science, Technology and Environment Ministry

For further details on the symposium, the public can visit the website <http://2001.domainvalet.com>.