

PM to savour Maliau Basin's best-kept secret
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Maliau Basin, which is poised to be a World Heritage Site soon, has become the most enticing destination in Sabah.

People from every part of the world, particularly nature lovers, love to come for the precious moments of savouring the pristine condition in Maliau Basin, also lovingly called Sabah's Lost World.

Maliau Basin is visited by tourists of different ages and from the entire globe.

Come this Saturday, Najib Abdul Razak will be first prime minister to visit this internationally-acclaimed area, and at the same time enjoy the golden chance of discovering Maliau Basin's best kept secret.

On that day, he is scheduled to open the Maliau Basin Studies Centre and witness the signing of several memorandums of understanding between local and international groups involved in research in the untouched rainforests of Sabah.

Najib is also expected to launch Project Safe undertaken by Sime Darby in the area during his visit to the 30 sq km basin off the east coast.

"Maliau Basin is our precious natural treasure and heritage that needs to be protected at all costs," state tourism, culture and environment minister Masidi Manjun told Bernama today.

"That's why the Sabah government had nominated Maliau Basin together with Danum Valley as a World Heritage Site for future generations to enjoy the designated areas of unspoilt natural beauty."

Impossible for human habitation

Over the past years, Maliau Basin has been the subject of the so-called "monkey or gold" debate - whether the area should be left as pristine as possible with only monkeys roaming the hills and plains, or to have its valuable minerals extracted for economic gain.

However, the debate subdued when the state government stood firmly and shot down the idea or the possibility of conducting mining operations in Maliau Basin.

Maliau Basin, which forms the major component of a Class I Protection Forest Reserve covering an area of 58,840 hectares in the southern interior of Sabah, is so named as it resembles a gigantic saucer-like basin with the rim ranging from 1,500m to 1,900m above sea level.

It is this unique feature, in addition to its isolation, that has made the basin impossible for human habitation and therefore, left unexplored.

Initially, Maliau Basin was part of Sabah Foundation's concession. It was turned into a conservation area in 1981 for research, education, training and eco-tourism purposes.

In 1997, this conservation area was upgraded into a Class 1 Forest Reserve under the state's Forest Enactment and finally gazetted as a Cultural Heritage Zone under the Cultural Heritage Enactment (Conservation) in 1999.

The basin's management is handled by Sabah Foundation while Maliau Basin's Management Committee acts as the adviser on issues related to research and macro management.

- Bernama

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