

10MP embraces forest conservation
Malaysiakini.com
June 27, 2010

Malaysia's plans to conserve two massive green corridors in the Peninsula and in Sabah and Sarawak under the 10th Malaysia Plan (10MP) will cover a combined area the size of Iceland.

Significantly, it will protect rare flora and fauna not found elsewhere, in one of the most recognised bio-diversified spots in the world.

In tabling the 10MP recently, Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak unveiled plans to implement the 4.32 million hectare 'Central Forest Spine' (CFS) in Peninsular Malaysia, and another six million hectares in Sabah and Sarawak for the 'Heart of Borneo' initiative.

CFS links four major forest complexes from Perlis in the north to Johor in the south, namely Banjaran Titiwangsa-Banjaran Bintang-Banjaran Nakawan, Taman Negara-Banjaran Timur, South East Pahang-Chini and Bera and the Endau Rompin Park-Kluang Wildlife Reserve.

World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) Malaysia executive director and chief executive officer Dionysius Sharma told Bernama:

"The key outcome of the successful implementation of the CFS is that significant forest habitats and existing natural corridors will be protected whilst restoring connectivity between fragmented forests, via a network of ecological linkages or wildlife corridors.

"The corridors would allow for the safe movement of wildlife between one forested area to another with minimal contact with humans and in this way, reduce the potential for conflicts between humans and wildlife."

Forests threatened

Sharma said the main threat to wildlife existence was the clearing of natural forests for development activities, forest plantations and infrastructure projects, causing loss of habitat as well as habitat fragmentation.

The entire massive tract is home to many rare species of flora and fauna.

Fraser's Hill, for example, was known to harbour 36 species of plants and at least, one species of tarantula, as well as several species of frogs and reptiles that could not be found anywhere in the world, he noted.

As the CFS forms the main tiger landscape, it is crucial for the National Tiger Conservation Action Plan Malaysia to raise the population of Malayan tigers to 1,000 by 2020.

The Heart of Borneo initiative covers 200,000 sq km of inter-connected rainforest in the provinces of Kalimantan (Indonesia), the states of Sabah and Sarawak (Malaysia), and Brunei Darussalam.

Supported by the three governments, it seeks to preserve the habitats of the Bornean orang utan, Pygmy elephants and Sumatran rhinoceros.

Malaysia has set aside four million hectares in Sabah and two million in Sarawak for the initiative.

The Malaysian side would cover the unique forested areas of the Kinabalu National Park, Danum Valley, Maliau Basin, Mulu National Park, Bario highlands, Pulong Tai National Park and Batang Ai National Park.

The Kinabalu National Park, a designated World Heritage Site, is recognised as an epicentre for the orchids, with over 2,000 species and over 35 species of the pitcher plant.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/135704>