

Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	23 February 2016

PRIME NEWS

# PM launches revised policy on biodiversity

*NS - 23/2/2016*

**SUSTAINABILITY:**  
Focus is on conservation, fair sharing of benefits from biodiversity

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**IPBES**

aimed to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

"Malaysia tries very hard to forge a balance between socio-economic development and environmental wellbeing, in particular, conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services."

Present were Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, the prime minister's science adviser and IPBES chairman, Tan Sri Zakri Abdul Hamid, former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Abdullah's wife, Tun Jeanne Abdullah, and United Nations Environment Programme deputy executive director Ibrahim Thiaw.

IPBES is a world body that convenes biodiversity science experts and policymakers. Its first assessment report, to be launched on Friday, constitutes the most authoritative review of the health and value of pollinators.

One of the primary focuses during the conference was the survival of pollinator species, which include bees, butterflies, beetles, birds and bats, and their significance to food production.

The conference found that pollinator populations were under threat by human activities in many parts of the world.

"If, indeed, pollinators are under threat, we must find a way forward to address those problems, and we look to you, the scientific community, and the body of your work for the options to ensure that these species survive and thrive," said Najib in his keynote address.

Najib paid tribute to an insect from Africa, which has helped the country's palm oil industry save over US\$10 billion (RM41.8 billion) because the bug was an effective pollinator.

"In the early years of our palm oil industry, pollination was done by hand, much of it by women — a time-consuming and ineffective practice.

"After years of study, a group of researchers found a highly effective pollinator for oil palm trees in the form of a weevil from Africa.

"This development led to a significant increase in oil palm production. And the total amount of money saved by the Malaysian palm oil industry between 1982 and 2015 by using this insect pollinator instead of human labour is believed to be in the magnitude of some US\$10 billion."

Najib outlined to scientists and policymakers a series of measures taken by the government to protect biodiversity in its own jurisdiction and through regional agreements.


He said Malaysia was embarking on the Central Forest Initiative, which covered an area to create linkages between the four main forest areas covering the central mountain range in Peninsular Malaysia.

Najib said at a regional level, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei were working together under the Heart of Borneo Initiative to conserve approximately 200,000 sq km of forest.

About 30 per cent of the protected area, he said, was in Malaysian territory.

"The services that nature provides sustain humanity — food, shelter, clean air and clean water.

"And yet, recent scientific assessments indicate that at least 60 per cent of natural resources are being degraded globally due to human activity, most particularly those occurring during the last half-century," he added.



*Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his predecessor, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, at the fourth plenary session of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre yesterday. Pic by Abdullah Yusof*