

Sabah To Draw Up More Comprehensive Guidelines On Safety Of Tourists
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KOTA KINABALU, April 30 (Bernama) -- The Sabah Tourism, Culture and Environment Ministry is drawing up a more comprehensive guidelines to ensure safety of visitors at its wildlife sanctuaries.

Its minister, Datuk Masidi Manjun, said the ministry would discuss the matter with the relevant agencies, including the Sabah Wildlife Department.

"We are looking at existing procedures, whether they have been complied with and personally, I think it is not about violating procedures," he said.

He was met after opening the 'Stakeholders Validation Workshop Imbak Canyon Conservation Area Strategic Management Plan 2014-2023' organised by the Sabah Foundation and Petronas here Wednesday.

Masidi said this in response to a report and photographs sent by the team of Honorary Wildlife Wardens from HUTAN, the Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Programme (KOCP), to Sabah Wildlife Director Datuk Dr Laurentius Ambu, who responded by saying he was really disappointed and shocked.

In the report, HUTAN claimed that tourism players (operators, guides, boatmen), including so-called "eco" operators, continued to ignore warnings and advice from the Sabah Wildlife Department and its partners, by placing themselves and their tourists at great risk to see the Borneo Pygmy elephants in the wild.

"The elephants are quite dangerous sometimes. The incident where an Australian tourist was killed should be a reminder to us all. We should not risk ourselves because the elephants can become violent," said Masidi.

He said such an incident could be avoided had the tour operator observed the standard operating procedures (SOP).

"The tour guide could have advised tourists from doing anything that might place them at risk, but we are still waiting for a full report on the incident," he added.

The incident occurred in December 2011 while the tourist was trying to capture a picture of a pygmy elephant during a visit to the Tabin Wildlife Forest Reserve.

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