

Habitat of endangered Malayan tigers vanishing

NATION

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PETALING JAYA: The Hulu Sempam area which has been cleared for durian plantation is vital to the survival of the Malayan tiger, which is now considered critically endangered.

The area, said WWF's Siti Zuraidah Abidin, had also been identified as an Expected Tiger Habitat under the National Tiger Action Plan for Malaysia 2008-2020 and its surrounding forests a confirmed tiger habitat.

"Land clearing at Hulu Sempam can cause the wider forests to be fragmented, which in turn can affect the wildlife movement," she said.

In June 2015, the Malayan tiger was moved from the "Endangered" to "Critically Endangered" category in the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species.

The National Tiger Action Plan aims to double the current tiger numbers in the wild to 1,000 by the year 2020.

However, with just two years to go before the plan's end date, the number of tigers in the wild is believed to have dwindled to about 300.

Launched in 2008, it singles out three major tiger refuge areas in need of protection: the Main Range, the Greater Taman Negara and the Southern Forest Landscape.

The Main Range landscape includes the Royal Belum and Gunung Stong Tengah state parks, Bintang Hijau forest, Ulu Muda forest and the Temenggor, Gunung Basor and Gunung Stong Utara Permanent Reserved Forests (PRF).

The Greater Taman Negara landscape encompasses Taman Negara National Park and over 10,000sq km of PRF around it while the Southern Forest landscape, which is isolated from the other two, includes four groups of increasingly fragmented forests: the Chini/Ibam forest, south-east Pahang peat swamp forest, Endau Rompin National Park and Endau-Kota Tinggi forest.

All are within the Central Forest Spine, a network of forest complexes crucial for biodiversity and environmental protection, mooted under the National Physical Plan.

The plan is the effort of the Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers (Mycat), a collaboration between Wildlife and National Parks Department, Malaysian Nature Society, Traffic South-East Asia, Wildlife Conservation Society and World Wide Fund for Nature-Malaysia.

MyCat general manager and conservation head Dr Kae Kawanishi said while the data collected for the plan was quite outdated, any forest clearance was a threat to the biodiversity in the area.

TAGS / KEYWORDS:

Tigers , **Hulu Sempam** , **Musang King**

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