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'Malaysians deserve to know why we voted against proposal to protect sharks, rays'



It was reported yesterday that Malaysia was among the 40 countries that opposed a proposal to protect certain species of sharks and rays from exploitation. - NSTP/OLIVIA MIWIL

By Olivia Miwil (</authors/olivia-miwil>) - August 27, 2019 @ 10:52am

KOTA KINABALU: It was reported yesterday that Malaysia was among the 40 countries that opposed a proposal to protect certain species of sharks and rays from exploitation.

Tabled by Mexico at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) conference, the proposal which would require ratification this week, would see the marine species no longer being traded unless it can be proven that their fishing would not impact their survival.

102 countries voted in favour of the move.

Representing Malaysia at the conference was the Water, Land and Natural Resources Ministry.

Sabah Shark Protection Association Aderick Chong told the New Straits Times that the state should take the lead when it comes to the protection of endangered shark species in its waters.

It was reported that among the newly protected species include mako sharks, wedgefishes and guitarfishes.

"Wedgefishes and guitarsharks are easy to identify and (thus) enforceable (ban from fishing or selling the species).

"What would be better is to protect all sharks (species) so that authorities do not have to identify which is protected and which is not," Chong said.

He added that Malaysians deserved to know the reasons behind the country's objection to the proposal.

"If we are to make any improvements we need to know what was behind the 'nay'," he said.

Last month, the federal government gazetted four species of shark and two species of ray to be listed as endangered under the newly amended Fisheries (Control of Endangered Species of Fish) (Amendment) Regulations 2019.

The newly listed species under the Shark group are *Sphyrna mokarran* (great hammerhead shark), *Sphyrna zygaena* (smooth hammerhead shark), *Eusphyra blochii* (winghead shark) and the *Carcharhinus longimanus* (oceanic whitetip shark).

The species under the Ray group are *Manta birostris* (oceanic manta) and *Manta alfredi* (reef manta).

On average, some 55,000 divers come to Sabah yearly and 80 per cent of them come to see live sharks.

This year-round activity contributes more than RM300 million in tourism receipts.

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