

29/11/2008 (Saturday)

## Forest treasures

Elizabeth John



**Two books on the flora and fauna found in the forests of Malaysia provide a spectacular and colourful insight of nature in all its glory, and a reminder to conserve these national treasures, writes ELIZABETH JOHN.**

THE dank forests that rise from the still, dark waters of a peat swamp are anything but attractive. However, the same can't be said for its occupants. Some are painted in the colour bursts of fireworks, some are dressed in delicate ruffles and folds and others are large and majestic. Unlikely as it seems, the muddy, mosquito-infested jungle is just where these beauties go to hide.

From rainbow-hued kingfishers to giant bats and exotic orchids, a host of nature's greatest and most gorgeous brighten up the thousands of hectares of drab grey-green swamps that dot the country. And they are featured in all their glory in two publications that are a result of a joint project between the United Nations Development Programme/Global Environment Fund project and the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia, in several peat swamp forests here.

Orchids of Peat Swamp Forests in Peninsular Malaysia detail the species found in peat swamp forests in four states. It was proposed after a surprisingly rich find during a 2004 scientific expedition to the Sungau Bebar forest in Pahang — 51 species, including some more commonly found in highland areas and two species of Vanilla. The orchid family consists of 30,000 species worldwide with Malaysia accounting for three per cent of that.

The book by Rusea Go and Khali Aziz Hamzah features several of these newfound beauties, details their history, diversity, traditional uses and the threats they face. The other stars of the peat swamp forests are featured in Birds and Bats of Logan Bunut National Park. Authored by

conservationist Dr Melvin Gumal, birder and bat biologist Jason Hon and naturalist Daniel Kong, it focuses on one of Sarawak's last large swathes of peat swamp forests — the Loagan Bunit National Park. The park that covers over 100,000 ha is home to Sarawak's largest freshwater lake, over a hundred species of bird and 36 species of bats, including the world's largest — the large flying fox.

A real heavyweight champion that weighs one kilogramme and boasts a wingspan of one metre, the large flying fox roots in big numbers in the park. One of the major attractions of the park is the mass emergence of this species in the evening, flying low over the lake and park quarters to feed in forests elsewhere. Apart from illustrations in full colour as well as close-up photos of these winged stunners, the book also advises how people can help conserve these natural treasures. Both also tell of the many threats its beautiful occupants face now and in years to come.

**30/11/2008 (Sunday)**

### **Tiger action plan to be out this week**

By : Elizabeth John

**KUALA LUMPUR: Hunted, hounded and generally harassed, Malaysia's wildlife can start breathing a little easier, thanks to several soon-to-be implemented plans and laws.** The first to find itself with less to growl about is the king of the jungle, which will benefit from the much-awaited National Tiger Action Plan 2008-2020. "This long-term roadmap for tiger conservation will be out this week," said Wildlife and National Parks department director-general Datuk Abd Rasid Samsudin.

It marks the start of earnest and coordinated efforts to protect one of Malaysia's most iconic and threatened animals. The International Trade in Endangered Species Act, recently passed by Parliament, will finally be enforced next year, confirms the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry. This legislation will empower officers of a number of government agencies to put the brakes on the multi-million dollar illegal trade in wild flora and fauna. It also gives them the power to confiscate products that claim to contain parts of protected wildlife.

The ministry is finalising the regulations under this new act, after which enforcement work can be carried out, said Norazeyan Dzulkornain of the ministry's Forestry Development division. And finally, amendments to the Protection of Wildlife Act 1972, almost a dozen years in the works now, will be tabled in Parliament next year. Since May this year, conservation groups have been hard at the heels of the ministry, to amend wildlife laws and put more punch into penalties.

They recently launched a petition for better wildlife laws, particularly the 35 year-old Protection of Wildlife Act that they characterised as "riddled with loopholes". Already, the campaign has received overwhelming support with 8,000 petitions signed and an additional 2,300 collected

online. Calls for a comprehensive review of the 35-year-old wildlife law have been made as far back as 1998 and they've come even from environment ministers. Substantial amendments were made in 1976 and 1988.

Numerous changes have also been made to the lists of protected animals and to regulations over the years. But a massive overhaul, the kind conservation groups have sought has yet to take place. The amendments to the act could not be tabled in Parliament this year as scheduled because other legislation took precedence, said Rasid.

But he added that once passed, the law will have maximum fines at least 10 times higher than current figures. Now, the maximum penalty is a RM15,000 fine and five years' jail for the unlawful shooting, killing or taking of a Sumatran rhino, tiger or clouded leopard. After amendments, penalties will be stiffer with mandatory jail sentences for some offences and the removal of jail-or-fine options in some cases.

Several wildlife listed as "game animals" will be removed from this list of animals that can be hunted. Among them are the elephant and several species of migratory birds, said Rasid. The sambar deer, recently categorised as a vulnerable species by the World Conservation Union, will remain on the list until the department studies the results of a survey it plans to conduct next year, said Rasid. But the amended law will allow for the better regulations of zoos and pet shops and will, for the first time, include wildlife welfare regulations.

**30/11/2008 (Sunday)**

### **State seeks bigger role in Langkawi**

By : Noor Adzman Baharuddin

**ALOR STAR: Kedah wants more say in the running of Langkawi's development programmes if the Langkawi Development Authority (Lada) charter is renewed in March 2010.**

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Azizan Abdul Razak said that it was a fair request by the Pas-led state government, considering that it also had some ideas to further boost the development in Langkawi, especially its tourism sector. "We are actually anxious because the federal authorities have yet to call for a meeting on Lada. "I have met Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and he advised us to wait," he said after launching the state-level Pesta Buku ceremony here yesterday.

He was asked to comment on the future of Lada, since its 15-year charter would lapse in March 2010. He said the state government wished to discuss some areas of development with the federal authorities to ensure maximum benefits for Langkawi residents and tourists. "We have several state agencies which could play a greater role in Langkawi. "March is not far away and we have much to discuss."

Azizan also pooh-poohed the claim by state BN chairman Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid that Langkawi would fail without Lada. "The state government will continue with its development programmes. We are open to suggestions and the ball is now in the federal authorities' court."

The dual-pronged objectives of Lada are to transform Langkawi into a major tourist destination and to ensure locals get maximum benefits from all the development programmes.

**1/12/2008 (Monday)**

### **EPF forms for members wishing to maintain 11 per cent contribution available from today**

Bernama

**Members of the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) who wish to maintain the employees monthly contribution rate at 11 per cent from January 2009 wage may obtain Form KWSP 17A (AHL) Khas from all EPF branches; or download it from myEPF website at [www.kwsp.gov.my](http://www.kwsp.gov.my) beginning today. Fully completed forms can be handed in to employers who will submit the completed forms to the EPF.**

The EPF has also made available Form KWSP 17AA (AHL) Khas to facilitate employers who wish to apply on behalf of more than two employees. Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister YAB Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak recently announced the reduction of the employees monthly statutory contribution rate from 11 per cent to 8 per cent, effective from January 2009 wage for a period of two years. The measure is taken to help increase members disposable income given the current economic climate. The higher disposable income will in turn support domestic consumption and help sustain the momentum of positive economic growth.

In relation to reduction in the statutory contribution rate which will take effect from January 2009 wage to December 2010 wage, a new monthly contributions schedule has been issued. Members and employers may download the new schedule from our website or get the schedule from any of our branches nationwide effective today

**2/12/2008 (Tuesday)**

**Owner: I told them about erosion**

By : Lee Shi-lan, Halim Said and Alang Bendahara



The site where the landslide occurred on Sunday is strewn with debris.  
— NST picture by Mokhsin Abidin

**KUALA LUMPUR: In the aftermath of Sunday's landslide that claimed the lives of two of his daughters, airline pilot Roslan Md Jali revealed yesterday that he had informed the property developer to monitor the situation in Ulu Yam Perdana on several occasions since moving into the house seven years ago.**

The 49-year-old pilot said he did this as he was concerned about soil erosion in the area. "Other complaints that I highlighted was on uncollected garbage, water overflowing from the drains and uncovered manholes.

"In May, after TV3 highlighted problems faced by residents in the area, the developer sent people to take care of the problems but no action was taken to deal with soil erosion. "I asked them to give me another house of equal value in a different location but they refused. I could not move out because I did not have the financial means to do so."

Roslan's daughters Noratirah, 16, and Norintan Sharina, 9, were killed after a landslide flattened the family home in Ulu Yam Perdana about 5.30am on Sunday. His wife, Azizah Md Don, 42, was still traumatised by the incident. Roslan said there was a possibility that they might purchase a house in Selayang and start afresh, but much would depend on the family's financial circumstances."I still have to pay RM2,500 monthly instalments to the bank for the loan we took to build the house. "There's also the RM1,200 needed monthly to pay for the two family cars, which were not covered by insurance."

He said a representative of the property developer visited the family yesterday and offered temporary accommodation at a Perangasng Templer Golf Club apartment in Rawang together

with a token compensation. Roslan declined to reveal how much was paid but said he was informed that further compensation would be decided by the company's board of directors. The couple and their other children -- Noraina Ayu, 21, Norlisa Azira, 8, Anis Afinah, 6, and Norman Afiq, 5 -- are presently staying with Roslan's sister in Kampung Sungai Tua Tanah Gantian, Batu Caves.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim visited the family yesterday to offer his condolences and extend state assistance. Speaking after the meeting, Khalid said he was dismayed by the landslide as he had recently announced that there would be no more development on hill slopes with more than a 35-degree gradient. "But developers objected to this ban without realising that is to prevent incidents such as this."

**1/12/2008 (Monday)**

**Seberang Perai Municipal Council acting president told to investigate 'missing' RM223.7 million**

**Penang Finance Officer Datuk Supiah Md Yusof of Penang has been told to investigate the RM223.7 million "missing" from the Seberang Perai Municipal Council (SPMC) reserves.**

Supiah, who was appointed SPMC acting president effective today, said Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng had given him two weeks to look into the council's expenses over the past nine years and submit a report to the state government. "The time given is enough and I don't think I have problems to work it out within the short period. It doesn't burden me," he told reporters after Lim gave a press conference at the SPMC building in Bandar Perda here today. A committee would be set up to carry out the probe, he said.

Earlier, he was sworn in as SPMC acting president before Lim. The ceremony was witnessed by State Local Government, Traffic Management and Environment Committee Chairman Chow Kon Yeow and members of the council. Lim said Supiah took up the acting post because SPMC president Farizan Darus was attending a course and would go on leave thereafter until Dec 31.

The state government had to get all data and information on SPMC's expenses before taking any legal action on parties found to have misappropriated the money or abused their power, he said. He blamed the previous state government for the big expenses incurred by SPMC and said that the council was facing severe financial problems as a result. However, he admitted that there were problems in proving the allegation. "Everyone is smart nowadays. We have difficulties in detecting it. When we took up office, even the files were not there and we have to prove it beyond reasonable doubt," he said.

He was responding to a question whether the state government would inform the Anti-Corruption Agency if the committee led by Supiah found information on the alleged misappropriation or power abuse.

Lim also said the state government could not afford to engage independent auditors to investigate the claim because it would be too expensive. Recently, Lim told the State Legislative Assembly that SPMC was facing a reserve shortage because of unnecessary expenses. This triggered a war of words between the state government and former state executive councillor in charge of local government Datuk Dr Teng Hock Nan on the big expenses incurred by SPMC which included allocations for the Seberang Perai assemblyman, construction of SPMC headquarters in Bandar Perda and maintenance of air-conditioner systems.

In the press conference, Lim said that on Jan 1, 2000, SPMC had a balance of RM230.1 million but now, it only had RM6.4 million and not enough to carry out development in its jurisdiction.

Among the major contributors to the missing RM223.7 million over the past nine years were the allocation of RM50.3 million to 21 assemblymen and RM8.6 million to over 20 SPMC members as money politics, he said. SPMC also lost over RM50 million when it awarded the contract to build the headquarters in Bandar Perda to Aseania Development Bhd without calling an open tender, he said.

The local council should have built its headquarters on its land in Ampang Jajar, he said and challenged the previous state government to prove its allegation that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim who was then Deputy Prime Minister had instructed the deal. — BERNAMA

**2/12/2008 (Tuesday)**

### **DEWAN RAKYAT: MPs lament getting no respect from government hospitals**

By : V. Vasudevan, Eileen Ng and Irdiani Mohd Salleh



Dr Lo Lo Mohamad Ghazali (left) and Datuk Dr Marcus Mojigoh.

**SEVERAL members of the Dewan Rakyat complained yesterday they could not obtain treatment at government hospital by producing their MPs' identity cards.**



They said they were also not treated with respect. However, Health Minister Datuk Liow Tiong Lai assured them he would see to it that all hospitals recognise the member of parliament identity cards and give the respect due to them. "There is a circular on the MPs' entitlement.

"The ministry will send another reminder to hospitals to ensure that members seeking treatment will be given what they are entitled to," he said during the debate on the allocations for the Health Ministry in the committee stage.

Liow said the MPs' card would provide care for the member and his or her family. Datuk Dr Marcus Mojigoh (BN-Putatan) complained that the hospital in his district had treated him with little respect and Dr Lo Lo Mohamad Ghazali (Pas-Tititwangsa) said Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia did not recognise the card.

Speaking at the Parliament lobby, Liow acknowledged that there had been instances where hospital staff had asked MPs for guarantee letters for treatment. "The card itself is a reference. Some of these incidents had occurred at weekends."

Earlier, Liow told the House that the government was doing its best to overcome the shortage of doctors and was now recruiting 510 of them from abroad. "Currently, we have 490 foreign doctors working in local hospitals. We will bring in doctors from Iran, Egypt, Pakistan and Mynamar," he said, adding that they would be English-speaking medical practitioners.

Liow said about 2,000 local medical graduates registered with the Health Ministry annually to fill posts in government hospitals. He said only 53 per cent of the vacancies for doctors were filled at government hospitals, citing an example where only 16 posts were filled out of 47 at the Segamat hospital. He added that there were now 23,378 doctors working in government hospitals, or one doctor for 1,045 people.

"The problem is mainly due to the high number of doctors and specialists leaving the government service... about 300 to 400 of them leave each year. "We have now 1,917 specialists, but that is still far less than what we need in the country."

Liow said steps were also taken to keep government doctors and specialists from leaving the service. These included providing them with extra allowances and freedom to carry out locum work. On the waiting time for patients at government hospitals, Liow said this had been cut to under 30 minutes for outpatient treatment, but it was longer for those seeking specialist treatment. On claims that foreign workers were collecting medication from hospitals in Sabah and selling them to pharmacies, Liow said the hospitals had been instructed to take action against this, such as controlling the medication that was being dispensed to patients. He said the problem was not widespread and the ministry was monitoring the situation.

On the recent melamine health scare, Liow said the Health Ministry was continuing with its tests on food. "The ministry now checks for melamine when it is doing random sampling of food. "It is now one of the chemicals that the ministry tests, in addition to pesticides and chemical residues."



2/12/2008 (Tuesday)

## Customs and Immigration complex launched



The Customs, Immigration and Quarantine complex in Bukit Chagar will be fully operational on Dec 16.

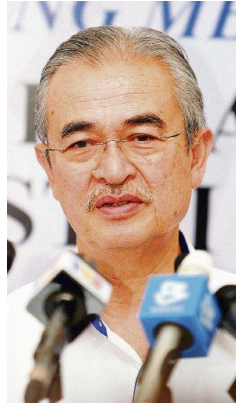
**JOHOR BARU:** The largest Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) complex in the country will be the transit point for more than nine million people travelling between Malaysia and Singapore each year. The Sultan Iskandar Building is expected to be the busiest land entry and exit point in Malaysia, with some 135,000 vehicles passing through daily. Yesterday, the complex was launched by the Sultan of Johor, Sultan Iskandar. The sultan was accompanied by his wife, Sultanah Zanariah Tunku Ahmad. Also present were the Tunku Mahkota, Tunku Ibrahim Ismail, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman. In his speech, Sultan Iskandar said the state was fortunate to have such a building, which will serve as a main entry point into the country. "The building is a landmark in Johor's history. Hopefully, it will provide better amenities for the people," he said.

Abdullah, in his speech, said the complex would operate round the clock, providing the best facilities to travellers. He said the RM1.3 billion building at Bukit Chagar would house 21 federal and state government agencies, as well as private firms. "The Immigration Department will be the leading agency operating in the complex. But other agencies will also have to play their roles with utmost dedication." Abdullah urged all agencies operating in the complex to give their best in terms of service. "Those working at this complex are Malaysia's ambassadors before the world. Together, we will present the country not only as a developed one, but also as one of the world's friendliest." It is learnt that the complex will be fully operational on Dec 16 and that a dry run will take place from today. The Sultan Iskandar Building, part of the Gerbang Selatan Ber-sepadu project initiated in 2003, includes new interchanges and upgraded roads, as well as the construction of a rail link to Singapore. It was initially supposed to be connected to the "scenic bridge", a project to replace the Johor Causeway that was cancelled in 2006.

**3/12/2008 (Wednesday)**

## **RM2b to pour into state with 'carrot'**

By : Rosli Zakaria and Sean Augustin



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi says 7,000 jobs will be created.

### **KERTEH: The East Coast Economic Region is expected to attract up to RM2 billion in private investment following the approval of incentives by the ECER Development Council.**

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said investors who start their operations at the Kerteh Plastic Park (KPP) before Dec 31, 2015 will be eligible for the incentives.

"With the incentive package, KPP is expected to attract RM2 billion worth of investments that could create 7,000 jobs. "KPP will also be able to generate development in the manufacturing industry and those related to packaging, medical equipment, building materials, composite and automotive materials. "In addition, it will encourage the growth of local small- and medium-scale industries," he said at the opening of the Kerteh Plastic Park yesterday.

Abdullah also noted that KPP had attracted five investors, including Hi-Essence Cable Sdn Bhd, which is investing RM85 million, Latenfield Pipe Industries Sdn Bhd (RM40 million) and FMD Polypipes Industry Sdn Bhd (RM20 million). He said of the 106 projects planned under the initiative, 77 have begun or were in the process of being implemented by next year.

In the next 12 years, he added, the ECER was expected to attract RM112 billion in investments, of which 47 per cent would come from the private sector. Earlier, when launching the ECER seminar at the Public Service Department Institute in Kemaman, Abdullah said those involved in the implementation of the ECER must look at the initiative seriously. "We don't want those who are not focused. That is why the training must be of high quality. We need to be serious."

**3/12/2008 (Wednesday)**

### **Developer ready to face probe**

**BUKIT MERTAJAM:** Aseania Development Sdn Bhd chairman Datuk Musa Sheikh Fadzir is prepared to face investigations over the Seberang Prai Municipal Council's (MPSP) depleted reserves.

Musa, who is Bukit Mertajam Umno chief, yesterday said projects carried out by his company for MPSP were done according to procedures. His company was awarded the contract to build the new MPSP headquarters in Bandar Perda at a cost of RM84.3 million. "We were awarded the project after submitting a proposal to MPSP," he said.

On Monday, Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng started a probe into why the council's reserves, which stood at RM230.1 million on Jan 1, 2000, had gone down to RM6.4 million now.

**3/12/2008 (Wednesday)**

### **Maintenance costs RM6m**

**THE maintenance of 60 federal buildings costs the government RM5.9 million a month, the Dewan Rakyat was told yesterday. Deputy Works Minister Datuk Yong Khoo Seng said this in reply to a question by Mahfuz Omar (Pas-Pokok Sena).**

PETRONAS made a profit before tax of RM17.2 billion from its operations in 33 countries for the financial year ended March 31. Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department S.K. Devamany said the five countries that contributed the most were South Africa, Sudan, Egypt, Chad and Myanmar.

THE government has approved RM309 million for maintenance and repairs to Royal Malaysian Police offices. Home Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said RM209 million was for maintenance and minor repair works and RM100 million was for repairs to buildings. He was replying to a question by Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing (BN-Bintulu).

PAS will convene a meeting on Dec 21 to decide on the candidate for the Kuala Terengganu by-election. The seat fell vacant following the death of two-term BN incumbent Datuk Razali Ismail last Friday. Pas deputy president Nasharuddin Mat Isa said the party had set up committees to make preparations for the by-election.

**4/12/2008 (Wednesday)**

## **Forestry Department to move in on trespassers in Raja Muda Musa forest reserve**

**SHAH ALAM:** The state Forestry Department will launch an operation at the Raja Muda Musa forest reserve in Tanjung Karang today to rid it of trespassers.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim said the operation was to clear the area of illegal plantations, cattle breeding and unauthorised structures like sheds. However, he said the state government would be lenient with those who encroached on the land to earn a living.

"We will provide alternative plots of land where they can relocate their farms. "They must report to the district officer so that we can identify them," he said after chairing the state executive council meeting here yesterday.

It was reported that more than 650ha of forest reserve and state land at three sites in the area had been ravaged and logged under the noses of the department. An investigation into the encroachment was launched.

The sites are important water catchment areas and their destruction could adversely affect rice yields in Tanjung Karang and Sekinchan.

**5/12/2008 (Friday)**

## **Nation faces blackout threat**

By : Zuraimi Abdullah



Datuk Seri Che Khalib Mohamad Noh says the delay has increased costs

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Tenaga Nasional Bhd said its delayed Central Area Reinforcement (CAR) transmission project is exposing Malaysia to risk of a major power failure. The CAR project, TNB's fourth high-capacity transmission route has been met with protests by some 20 families in Kampung Sungai Terentang, Rawang, who are affected by its implementation. The issue has since been politicised, and has delayed the RM324 million project by more than a year. It should have been completed in August last year.

"TNB is now operating under high risk due to insufficient transmission capacity from the existing three high capacity routes," said TNB president and chief executive officer Datuk Seri Che Khalib Mohamad Noh at a briefing here yesterday. About 98 per cent of the project is completed, leaving only the disputed two per cent or 1km of the 60km stretch linking Bukit Tarek in Selangor to the Chubadak substations in Kuala Lumpur.

The unfinished work involved the installation of four towers to complete the fourth route that will channel electricity to some 6.5 million households. Che Khalib said the January 2005 blackout had cost losses running into billions of ringgit. The total load loss when power was disrupted for up to five hours then was 6,400MW, affecting three million customers. The country, Che Khalib said, barely missed another big power disaster on Feb 4 this year when one of TNB's three existing routes failed.

Fortunately, the incident happened during a non-peak period at 9am. "Should this happen a few hours later, a repeat of the Jan 13, 2005 blackout would have been inevitable," said TNB vice-president of distribution Ab'llah Mohd Salleh.

Ab'llah said if the CAR project had been completed on schedule, the addition of the fourth high-capacity route would have been able to carry the excess power in place of the lost circuits. Che Khalib said the delay had sharply increased the CAR development cost.

**2008/12/05**

## **More orang utan after logging ban**

By : Jaswinder Kaur



Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman witnessing Sabah Forestry Department director Datuk Sam Mannan (left) and Sime Darby Bhd group chief sustainability officer Puvan Selvanathan (right) exchanging the memorandum of agreement yesterday.

**KOTA KINABALU: The orang utan and other endangered wildlife are making their presence felt at the Ulu Segama and Malua commercial forest reserves almost a year after the Sabah government slammed the brakes on logging at the two sites, giving up billions in potential revenue from timber.**

Sabah Forestry Department director Datuk Sam Mannan said that forests at the reserves were starting to look better, a signal that the government had taken the correct step when it announced to the world that it would halt logging at Ulu Segama and Malua, which collectively are almost four times the size of Singapore. "The forest itself is looking better and we see animals more often now. We see tembadau (wild cattle) and orang utan," he said.

Sabah had in March 2006 said it would stop logging by Dec 31 last year at the two forest reserves due to the high concentration of wildlife. There are an estimated 4,500 orang utan at Ulu Segama and Malua, almost half of that found in Sabah. Mannan was speaking after signing a memorandum of agreement with Sime Darby Berhad group chief sustainability officer Puvan Selvanathan for the restoration of degraded forests on a 5,400ha site in the northern part of the Ulu Segama forest reserve.

Sime Darby has pledged RM25 million to restore the habitat of the orang utan by planting indigenous tree species and developing environmental awareness programmes and exchange knowledge to improve wildlife conservation efforts.

"Sime Darby has given us the biggest-ever endowment from outside the government to restore orang utan habitats degraded by years of bad logging practices, multiple forest fires and the threat of encroachments," he said.

"Despite the poor forest condition, northern Ulu Segama is rich in orang utan because it is the last forest refuge north of the Segama river, with its surroundings now developed. "With this endowment, we believe we can restore the habitat and give the orang utan a better home."

Mannan also pointed out that forest restoration was an expensive business, with more than RM200 million poured in by the Sabah government over the last five years. He added that political support was crucial in the quest for good environmental and forest governance.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman, who witnessed the event, said he was pleased that Sime Darby and other organisations had come forward to assist the state in its efforts to restore degraded jungles. "Orang utan and other wildlife are important to us. "We have lost billions in (potential) royalty from logging but we took this bold step to stop logging (at Ulu Segama and Malua)."

Sime Darby president and group chief executive Datuk Seri Ahmad Zubir Murshid said the company was proud to participate in the conservation effort. "Sabah has taken a critical leadership position. Ulu Segama is nature's gift to the world but it paid the price of development. "Now the government wants to restore it and it is not going to be a simple exercise," Ahmad Zubir said.