

Banteng in danger of extinction in Sabah

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KOTA KINABALU: Bornean Banteng, the cattle known for their "white socks" will likely be Sabah's next species to become extinct if conservation efforts are not stepped up.

"Conservationists estimate that only 500 bantengs or wild buffalo are left in the wild," said Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Masidi Manjun.

"My fear is that the banteng, which is sought for its meat and horns, will become extinct in our lifetime," he said.

He voiced concerns that these cattle could suffer the same fate as Borneo rhinoceros.

"We need to do a lot more. Our rhinos are practically extinct. We have only three left and they are not healthy enough to reproduce," he said when launching a book titled *Upin: A Bornean Banteng* co-authored by Jaswinder Kler, Penny Gardner and Dr Benoit Goossens.

Masidi said everyone had a role to play including ensuring an orderly distribution of land for agriculture and other development to avoid fragmentation of forests.



STAR
1/3/16

Endangered:
Three male banteng at an artificial salt lick in Malua Forest Reserve. — Picture courtesy of SWD/DGFC

"We have to ensure there are ample forests (for wildlife to thrive) through orderly management of land for other purposes," he said, explaining that 60% of Sabah forests were fragmented.

"We have to do what is right rather than popular as we have to ensure that Sabah's flora and fauna are conserved as they are our tourism selling point."

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It was important, he said, not to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. He said the state government, through various NGOs, corporate donors as well land owners, was working towards restoring forest corridors to link various fragmented forests in efforts to ensure the survival of Sabah wildlife.

The state did not want to use mandatory land acquisition laws as it preferred to work with land owners to be part of the effort to rebuild the forest corridors, he added.

He urged conservationists to increase efforts to educate the public and the young generation on the importance of preserving flora and fauna in the state.