

# Tigers may vanish from Belum-Temenggor forest

**GERIK:** The Malayan tigers in the Belum-Temenggor Forest Reserve face an uncertain future as rampant poaching continues.

Perak State Parks Corporation (PSPC) general manager Mohamed Shah Redza Hussein said the species could vanish from the forest reserve in the next six to seven years if no immediate and drastic measures were taken.

"About seven to eight years ago, we had more than 60 tigers in Belum-Temenggor area. But the latest study shows that there are only 23 left in this rainforest.

"This shows that the population has declined by about 60 per cent. If we do not act now, I'm afraid within the next two or three years, we will have fewer than 10 tigers left, which is not enough for reproduction.

"And within six or seven years, this species will vanish," he said after attending the World Tiger Day celebration at Taman Inai.

The event was jointly organised by PSPC, Gerik district council and Malayan Tiger Conservation

Association.

Present were Raja Permaisuri Perak Tuanku Zara Salim and her children Raja Kecil Besar Raja Azlan Muzaffar Shah and Raja Nazira Safya; and Raja Dihilir Perak Raja Iskandar Dzulkarnain Sultan Idris Shah.

The Belum-Temenggor Forest Reserve forms the last and largest block of natural forest in Peninsular Malaysia.

It covers an area of over 300,000ha in the state and crosses into southern Thailand.

Shah Redza added that PSPC and the state Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan) had identified that most poaching was done by Indochina nationals with the help of locals here.

"These poachers who have vast experience are from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. We know that there are no more tigers in these countries.

"These poachers know that there exists a number of tigers, especially in the peninsula. Even



Perak State Parks Corporation general manager Mohamed Shah Redza Hussein (left) briefing Raja Permaisuri Perak Tuanku Zara Salim and her children Raja Kecil Besar Raja Azlan Muzaffar Shah and Raja Nazira Safya in Gerik yesterday. PIC BY ABDULLAH YUSOF

though there are fewer than 200 tigers left, they are determined to catch, kill and trap our tigers. It's time for us to fight back."

On measures to be taken immediately, Shah Redza said PSPC had increased their patrolling of officers from 16 to 32 this year.

"We hope we can increase the number to 50, but we are facing financial constraints.

"At the same time, the federal government has conducted many programmes to create awareness.

"Last week, the prime minis-

ter's wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali urged Malaysians to help with tiger conservation efforts," he added.

Shah Redza said PSPC was boosting its technical expertise, such as conducting more specialised training and deploying sophisticated equipment.

However, all these required a lot of funds, he added.

"We have held discussions with the state government to make Perak a zero-poaching state.

"Raja Dihilir Perak as the patron of PSPC, and the Perhilitan

director-general have given their commitment. We will come out with a comprehensive plan to ensure that natural resources are preserved," he added.

He advised the locals not to disrupt the tiger's main food source, such as the sambar deer, as this could affect the population of the Malayan tigers.

"Locals should stop providing logistics and food to poachers. The right thing to do is to lodge a report with the authorities. Offenders can be charged with abetment," he added.