



## Bold move to save 300,000ha forests for the future

By Chris Maskilone

**KOTA KINABALU:** The State Government in a landmark decision that has positive global implications has approved nearly 300,000 hectares of forest reserves in the East Coast to be managed under Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) principles and for conservation of bio-diversity, effective this month.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman said the Cabinet on Wednesday agreed for the SFM concept, pioneered in the Deramakot Forest Reserve, to be expanded to the whole of Ulu Segama Reserve comprising 203,808ha, Malua Forest Reserve comprising 33,969ha and Ulu Kalumpang Forest comprising 51,118ha.

"Harvesting of timber, which first commenced in the early 1960s in Ulu Segama during the colonial era and Malua in the 1970s will be phased out by Dec. 31 2007," he said.

Following the decision, Sabah now have close to one million hectares of untouched forest (including Danum Valley and Maliau Basin), which according to the Forestry Department, would see the State Government foregoing about RM1 billion in revenue from the forestry sector.

Ulu Segama is bordering Danum Valley on the southern side while Malua is on the northern side of the valley. The Ulu Kalumpang Forest Reserve is located in the Tawau region, which is a vital catch-

ment area.

Musa announced this after chairing the Cabinet meeting at Wisma Innoprise in Likas where all the Ministers were present.

Also on hand were the WWF-Malaysia Executive Director Datuk Dr Mikaail Kavanagh, Chairman Tengku Datuk Dr Zainal Adlin, National Programme Director Dr Dionysius Sharma and State Forestry Director, Sam Mannan.

"After that, there will be no felling of timber...so this area will be reserved for future generation," he said, adding that a forest management planning team led by the Forestry Department in collaboration with the long term licensee, Yayasan Sabah, had been entrusted to commence the planning process.

The thrust, he said, would be Natural Forest Management (NFM), given the high bio-diversity and high conservation value of the area, being the heartland of Sabah's orang utan population.

Citing figures, he said the last census of 2002-2003 by the Wildlife Department, gave an estimate of some 1,100 orang utans in Malua and in excess of 3,300 in Ulu Segama or about 35 per cent of Sabah's total orang utan population.

Musa said the State Government was also pleased with the recent visit by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), in relation to the Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP), which praised Sabah for its far-sighted policies in protecting bio-diversity, principally the orang utan.

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