

Entrance fee proposed to maintain recreational forests

By IVAN LOH
ivanloh@thestar.com.my

PERAK Forestry Department is considering imposing an entry fee for all its recreational forests in the state.

State Forestry Department director Datuk Mohamed Zin Yusop said the department would submit a working paper to the state executive council for a minimum RM2 fee to be charged for those wanting to enter the recreational sites.

He said of the 14 recreational forests in the state, six were already charging visitors a fee.

"I think RM2 is not much, just a minimal fee that will allow us to maintain the forests and facilities.

"It still depends on the state government to determine what's best for the people," he told reporters at the Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park in Ipoh.

Among the recreational forests that are now imposing an entry fee include Kledang Saiong Eco Park, Ulu Kenas, Kuala Woh, Papan and Lata Kinjang Forest Eco Park.

Mohamed Zin said he hoped it could be implemented within two years.

"We want to do it in stages," he said, adding that other facilities like halls within its recreational sites were also available for rental.

He also said any parties that were willing to help manage its recreational forests could approach them.

"We are willing to allow operators to run and manage these recreational sites.

"The offer is, however, only open to those who are capable of maintaining the area," he said.

On another matter, Mohamed Zin said the department was set to launch a tree adoption programme in a bid to lessen the state's dependence on revenue from logging activities.

He said the Perak Oxygen Land Bank initiative would see trees "sold" to interested parties for a sum to be looked after and maintained.

He said the initiative was set to

RM2 is just a minimal fee that will allow us to maintain the forests and facilities.

Datuk Mohamed Zin Yusop

be launched at the Royal Belum State Park sometime in September or October.

"There are two areas involved, including Royal Belum and the Chikus Forest Reserves.

"The trees are not to be felled and depending on its species, interested individuals or companies can 'buy' the trees for between RM2,000 and RM5,000," he said.

"We will give them certificates and a map of where the tree they bought is located while also allowing them to use our facilities near the locations.

"Participants will also get tax exemption," he added.

Mohamed Zin said the idea came from Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Faizal Azumu.

"We are incurring cost instead of generating revenue from taking care of these forests," he said, adding that the state's permanent forest reserve and proposed permanent forest reserve was about 990,000ha.

"There have been plenty of non-governmental organisations voicing out against logging activities, so maybe they can consider this offer if they are sincere."

Mohamed Zin said the state could not stop logging activities as some industries still relied on them.

"We cannot stop 100% as there are still furniture manufacturers and other related industries.

"There are about 6,000 employees in these related fields and they would lose their jobs if logging activities are stopped permanently," he said.



Mohamed Zin (second from left) receiving a memento during the 'Jungle Park In Town' programme at Kledang Saiong Eco Park in Meru, Perak, — RONNIE CHIN/The Star