

## Setting Up Research Centres Part Of Plan To Protect Pantı Forest Reserve

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JOHOR Forestry Department is finalising a report on protecting the 12,140ha Pantı Forest Reserve in Kota Tinggi.

Its director Datuk Salim Aman said the Pantı Conservation Area (PCA) report would be the basis for a development master plan to further enhance conservation efforts.

One of the plans is to set up a research centre at the department's offices in Kota Tinggi and Taman Eko Rimba Gunung Pulai, he said.

"We are waiting for a budget from the Johor government to develop these two research centres.

"Experts from Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) Batu Pahat and Malaysia Nature Society (MNS) will also collaborate on the research centres," he revealed to *StarMetro* when contacted.

Salim said all findings made during a five-day scientific expedition to the forest reserve in August would be published and displayed at a forum in February next year.

"The expedition team recorded over 500 species of animals, plants and bugs, including 17 dragonflies, seven butterflies, 50 species of ants, eight species of grasshoppers, 20 species of frogs and 16 species of reptiles."

"This is in line with our effort to develop the forest reserve as a special conservation zone under the PCA, which includes research and development as well as assisting the local community through eco-tourism activities," he explained.

The expedition in August was the second time after the first in 2006.

"All the findings will be turned into a photo book, which can be used as an academic reference in the future," Salim added.

On the preservation of Pantı Forest Reserve, Kota Tinggi district officer Datin Paduka Hazlina Jalil said the PCA would be able to reduce human-elephant conflict in Kota Tinggi by maintaining and managing the forest reserve, which is the mammals'

main habitat.

"Kota Tinggi is known for its human-elephant conflict.

"With the recent expedition by the Forestry Department, we hope to be able to highlight the forest's rich biological resources, which makes it even more important to be protected.

"The data collected will also help us plan how to better manage and develop the forest reserve," she said when contacted.

Hazlina said many flora and fauna in the forest were yet to be discovered and it had the potential to be one of the eco-tourism destinations in Johor.

"The Pantı Forest Reserve is a famous spot for hiking, with tourists going up Gunung Pantı, Gunung Muntahak, Bukit Sisek, Air Terjun Pelepah Kiri and Batu Tenggek.

"It is also well known among nature photographers in search of unique bird species," she said.

Good planning was needed to ensure the forest reserve was managed well through the PCA and becomes a must-visit site, she reiterated.



This snake species was discovered during the five-day scientific expedition to the Pantı Forest Reserve, Kota Tinggi.