



**Sahabat Alam Malaysia**  
**Friends of the Earth Malaysia**  
For Environmental Justice

1, Jalan Joki, 11400 Penang, Malaysia  
Tel No: +604 827 6930  
Fax No: +604 827 6932  
Email: foemalaysia@gmail.com  
<https://www.foe-malaysia.org>

Letter to Editor

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**Stop killings of elephants in Sabah**

Sabah has made headlines time and again with the deaths of the pygmy elephants. What shocked Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) was the manner in which the poor elephant was brutally gunned down. Not only was it shot at several times, its tusks were also hacked off.

The continuous spate of killing of elephants is reflective of poor government delivery system; that it happens often enough can only mean that those entrusted with the tasks, namely the Wildlife Department are not doing enough.

However, with the public outcry and the latest probe into the incident aided by the police that led to the arrests of the six suspects, there may be light at the end of the tunnel for the remaining elephant population. Credit must be given to the informer too that led to the quick arrests of the suspects.

Firm and stern action must be taken against the culprits so that this serves as a precedent. SAM also demands that action be taken against the plantation company for allowing their men to commit such brutality. The company should know better that any wildlife encounter or problems should be referred to the Wildlife Department instead of taking the matter into their own hands.

There have been a string of killings in Sabah as far back as 2013 with many cases unsolved till today.

Threatened from all fronts from widespread logging of their natural habitat for agriculture and plantation development, the cutting off of elephant migratory routes, to poisoning, poaching, accidental deaths and the resulting human-elephant conflict, the future of these baby faced, over sized ears pachyderm is all but doom and gloom.

Considered as pest or threat to agriculture crops, the elephants are subjected to retribution by plantation owners. Every year, elephants are found either shot or poisoned across Sabah's elephant home ranges, though the public often hears nothing about it.

In the name of economic and agricultural activities, thousands of hectares of wildlife habitats have been cleared. There is every need to stop the "Business As Usual Deforestation" model and better manage Sabah's landscape before the decimation of more endangered species.

The conversion of forests into plantations has created fragmented or patches of habitats that are not enough to contain large elephant herds. This forces the species out of their habitats and at many instances venture to plantations or even villages.

It is thus essential for forest corridors at plantations or even villages to allow elephant movement from one habitat to another, to restore riparian corridors and ensure proper land use planning to locate fences and corridors.

It is about time the Sabah state government and the Sabah Wildlife Department come out with effective and concrete conservation action plans to prevent more untoward deaths of Sabah's precious elephants and wildlife.

Meenakshi Raman  
President  
Sahabat Alam Malaysia