



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

Press Statement

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Wildlife trade is rapidly depleting Malaysia's biodiversity

Recent reports on the rampant trapping and smuggling of the popular songbird Oriental Magpie-Robin (*murai kampung*) is just the tip of the iceberg. Almost 27,000 of Oriental Magpie-Robin had been confiscated in just 44 incidents between 2015 and 2020 and Malaysia has been implicated in the trafficking of the birds.

It is ironical that Oriental Magpie-Robin is not protected under wildlife legislations in peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak but is protected under the Sabah's Wildlife Conservation Enactment 1997. We therefore want the government to provide the Oriental Magpie-Robin legal protection in peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak as well.

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) urges the government to review the existing legislation pertaining to wildlife to provide stronger protection to Malaysia's rapidly depleting wildlife populations caused by activities such as illegal poaching, illegal trafficking, deforestation, logging, pollution, and illegal hunting. Activities such as these are threatening and endangering many animal and plant species, driving them towards extinction.

According to a report, Malaysia had lost 2.63 million hectares of humid primary forest between 2002 and 2019, equivalent to 34 percent of total tree cover loss or 17 percent of humid primary forest loss. It is a significant figure that the government cannot ignore and should ensure that forest produce is not taken out of permanent forest reserve or state land without license and proper trackable documentation.

Malaysia ranked twelfth in terms of being the most biodiverse countries in the world. However, Malaysia also has 1,141 threatened species including plants and animals. For example, there are fewer than 200 Malayan tigers left in the wild. In the 1950s, there were as many as 3,000 of them and by 2014 there were between 250 and 340 left.

Malaysia was identified in Traffic's 2016 report that between 2003 and 2014, nearly 20 percent of the world's ivory were seized and that they were either confiscated in Malaysia or had already transited through it. As statistics show, there were 235 seizure cases between 2012 and 2016 with 320 cases of prosecutions but with only 254 cases of convictions. Even then the majority (74 percent) of the conviction cases were about the keeping of wildlife. Only a measly 6 per cent concerns poaching and 17 percent for smuggling and illegal trading of wildlife. This shows that despite the efforts by various agencies, the criminals involved in the smuggling and illegal trading were seldom caught.

In view of this scenario, we appeal to the government to increase the current penalties for offences such as trafficking, hunting, and possession of wildlife or their parts. The penalties should include mandatory jail sentence. We propose the inclusion of mandatory jail sentence because these traffickers may be financially capable of paying fines.

The government should also address the reason why Malaysia is identified by criminals as an important transit point for the smuggling of wildlife as well as their parts and products. The 2018 report by the Wildlife Justice Commission revealed that Kuala Lumpur is the easiest port to illegally transport wildlife. The report also revealed that the 'tax' paid to transit through Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) or KLIA2 is 50 percent cheaper as compared with Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport.

We also call upon the government to consolidate the wildlife legislations of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. The disparities between the legislations have been a stumbling block for a long time for law enforcement.

MOHIDEEN ABDUL KADER
President
Consumers Association of Penang (CAP)