

Sarawak adds 600,000 ha to Heart of Borneo area

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Dr Xavier (fourth left) officiating the 12th HoB trilateral meeting in Miri as Len (3rd left) and others look on.

MIRI: The Sarawak government has expanded its Heart of Borneo (HoB) area by 600,000 hectares to 2.7 million hectares, expanding Malaysia's area in the initiative to 30 per cent in Borneo.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan disclosed this in his speech read out by Assistant Minister of Urban Planning, Land Administration and Environment Datu Len Talif Salleh at the opening of the 12th HoB trilateral meeting between Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia here yesterday.

“With this expansion, the state government hopes that the federal government could increase the allocation to implement the activities or programmes within the HoB area,” he said.

Sarawak has received RM26.7 million from the federal government since 2009 for the HoB initiative and the state government has contributed funding for various projects and activities implemented by the various government agencies under the initiative.

Awang Tengah, who is also Second Minister of Urban Planning and Natural Resources, said the state also welcomed the participation of the private sector and NGOs in implementing the projects or programmes in the HoB areas.

Sarawak has collaborated with NGOs and corporations such as Shell, Petronas, Sarawak Energy Berhad, Samling, WWF and others in conservation and community projects within and outside HoB areas in the state.

The state has also received funding from international bodies such as the International Timber Trade Organisation (Itto) and Afnet for projects within HoB areas, which is the pride of Sarawak.

Awang Tengah suggested that the federal government consider tax deductions as incentive to acknowledge and encourage such participation.

He said Sarawak with the support of the federal government is committed to implementing the programmes and projects under its Project Implementation Framework (PIF) as HoB is a showcase of inter-government collaboration in achieving sustainable forest management, conservation of biological diversity, sustainable agriculture and land use, community-based programmes and ecotourism promotion.

Sarawak has gazetted 60 totally protected areas (TPA) including national parks, nature reserves and wildlife sanctuaries, covering a land area of 788,886 hectares and territorial water of 231,954 hectares.

It is in the initial stage of gazetting Luconia Shoals covering an area of 1,011,772 hectares over the Sunda Continental Shelf in the Malaysian Exclusive Economic Zone as marine national park, the biggest in the country when gazetted,

Awang Tengah said the state government also enacted the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre Ordinance 1997 and set up Sarawak Biodiversity Centre to initiate intensive biotech-based research and development of her biological resources, particularly those used by the 26 ethnic communities and document the fast disappearing traditional knowledge of their usages.

In ensuring sustainable forest resources management, he said the state government had mandated that all holders of long-term licences obtain Forest Management Certification by 2022 while encouraging oil palm companies to obtain sustainability and good agriculture practices certification.

It also promotes coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources through integrated watershed management to maximise economic and social welfare without compromising sustainability of the vital ecosystem and environment, he added.

“This is actually in line with Green Economy concept,” he pointed out.

He looked forward to a fruitful outcome from the 12th HoB trilateral meeting which was officiated by Water, Land and Natural Resources Minister Dr Xavier Jayakumar in his first official visit to the state since his appointment.