

‘Hunting, selling of crocs to reduce population, conflict with humans’

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(Seated from left) Alexander, Nyurak and Dayang Nuriza in a photo call with programme participants.

MIRI: The hunting and trading of crocodiles in the state was approved by the government in a bid to reduce its increasing population and to reduce conflict between humans and the reptiles.

Miri deputy resident Nyurak Ketu, who said this, pointed out that allowing the hunting and selling of the reptiles, especially estuarine crocs, will also enable local communities living in such areas the chance to earn extra income.

“The community needs to learn more about crocodiles and come up with a more holistic approach to reduce the number of crocodiles in the river to ensure their safety when using the river.

“I was made to understand that a crocodile can lay between 50 and 80 eggs (each breeding season), so imagine the increase in their population if we do not do anything about it,” he said during the launch of ‘Education and Awareness Programme on Human-Crocodile Conflict 2018’ here yesterday.

Nyurak, who was representing Miri Resident Sherrina Hussaini at the event, said crocodile attacks will cause stress to the family of the victim and also the surrounding community.

“This matter must be addressed accordingly because there are still a lot of people relying on the river for water and food source and also as mode of transportation,” he said.

He also disclosed that a total of 60 estuarine crocodile hunting licences and 30 licences to sell the reptiles have been issued by the Forest Department thus far. There are 19 areas throughout Sarawak declared as crocodile-free zones – seven in Kuching, Sri Aman (1), Sarikei (1), Sibu (1), Bintulu (1), Miri (6) and Limbang (2) – where licensed crocodile hunting is permitted.

Meanwhile, Miri forest officer Alexander Anthony Banyan, representing Forest Department director Hamden Mohammad, said the programme was held so that participants would better understand the status of crocodiles through their ecology and the law in order to reduce human-crocodile conflict.

“The government through Forest Department and Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC) is committed to handle this issue. Thus we need cooperation from all parties so that any untoward incident can be reduced or avoided.

“The government is also aware that the estuarine crocodile species has the potential to endanger the human population but, at the same time, it is important to take into account that crocodiles are the last relics of dinosaurs on this earth and we do not want them to become extinct,” he said.

About 73 participants comprising community leaders, department heads and officers and non-governmental organisations took part in the programme where they were briefed on matters pertaining to crocodile awareness by Forest Department wildlife officer and programme coordinator Dayang Nuriza Abang Abdillah and as well as officers Nur Afiza Umar and Wilma Manchu.