

Forest Dept to embark on FLR programme to ensure sustainability

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Hamden (third left) gestures after unveiling the new logo while Liam (fourth right) and others look on.

KUCHING: The Forest Department will embark on a large-scale forest landscape restoration (FLR) programme beginning this year to ensure sustainable forest management in Sarawak.

Its director Hamden Mohammad said under the FLR programme, the priority would be to plant indigenous species like belian, meranti, keruing, selangan batu, engkabang, kapur and many other local species on degraded areas within the licensed areas.

“The FLR will be a bigger agenda for the department starting this year, whereby we will plant iconic indigenous tree species on degraded areas within the licensed areas.

“We will work together with the local community, government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), schools and the private sector to make Sarawak greener in the next 100 years because keeping the forest alive is our mission,” Hamden told reporters yesterday.

Hamden said Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg was aware of their FLR programme, and had agreed to give funds, which could be between RM5 million and RM10 million.

He earlier unveiled the department’s new logo at their office in Wisma Sumber Alam, Petra Jaya, here in conjunction with its 100 anniversary.

His deputy Jack Liam and other senior officers were among those present.

Hamden added that their nurseries in Sabal (Simunjan), Jalan Oya (Sibu), Niah and Lawas would be revived and provided with indigenous seedlings.

They would also work with the local community to source the local seedlings.

He said the Sarawak government was always putting great emphasis on sustainable forest management.

This was proven with the reduced number of timber licences being issued – from 468 in the past to only 186 now.

He said the timber licences were slowly being revoked since 2013 as part of the government's measures to reduce timber harvesting.

Also, all long-term forest timber licence in Sarawak must have forest management certification by 2022.

Sarawak already has six forest management units (FMUs) covering an area of more than 561,000 hectares.

For the record, the Forest Department is the second oldest department in Sarawak after the Land and Survey Department.

The department, since its establishment 100 years ago, has 17 directors, and has been able to protect and preserve the forest, and contribute significantly to Sarawak's economy.

Hamden also said the department would use the latest technology like compact airborne tactical (CAT), hyperspectral and drones, among others, to manage and look after our forest more systemically.

The department would also embark on 'social forestry', to ensure that the people living near permanent forest reserves and logging areas would benefit from the development.

Meanwhile, a series of events would be held throughout the year in conjunction with the department's 100 years' anniversary.

Among them are 'Forest 100 years Fun Run' in Kuching, Miri, Bintulu and Miri, exhibition during the May State Legislative Assembly sitting, and a gala dinner.