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BORN FREE

It's all about giving animals a good life in the zoo

By **PAULINE ALMEIDA**

— mmnews@mmail.com.my —

PETALING JAYA: It is not about who runs the zoo but how it's managed. A good team of experts, and resources, will give zest to animal life in captivity.

These are the views of experts in response to Zoo Negara director Dr Mohamad Ngah's comment earlier this month that the government had no right to get a government-linked company (GLC) to manage the zoo.

Dr Mohamad was responding to Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Douglas Uggah Embas who said last month that the government was considering several options to upgrade the zoo, including turning the Malaysian Zoological Society into a GLC.

Botanist Dr L.G. Saw said experts, resources and aesthetic

value mattered the most when promoting a zoo. Without any of these components, any zoo will be tough to manage.

"A zoo is an expensive venture. It depends on how well it is taken care of, whether by the government, a public listed company or a non-governmental organisation," he said.

Saw cited Taiping Zoo as a good example of a well-managed zoo.

"In the end, it boils down to a good team of experts and a pool of resources. You cannot have one without the other, or you will face problems trying to take care of the animals and their environment."

A zoologist from the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), who declined to be named, said public participation was needed to ensure that a zoo appealed to visitors.

This is essential to convey the message of conservation to both

the young and old. Conservation is a sign of a progressive society, therefore public recommendations and views will help improve Zoo Negara.

"Besides, a zoo is an education centre for conservation, so a visit to the zoo forms imprints in the mind of the young who go on to become professionals in a related field," he added.

Meanwhile, *The Malay Mail* learnt that the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry will present a paper on its study on Zoo Negara and its proposals for the Cabinet's endorsement soon.

On January 4 Dr Mohamed was quoted in the press as saying the government did not have the right to get a GLC to run Zoo Negara.

This was because the Malaysian Zoological Society, which currently runs the zoo, is an NGO and it could not be turned into a GLC.