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Drive to save forests on track

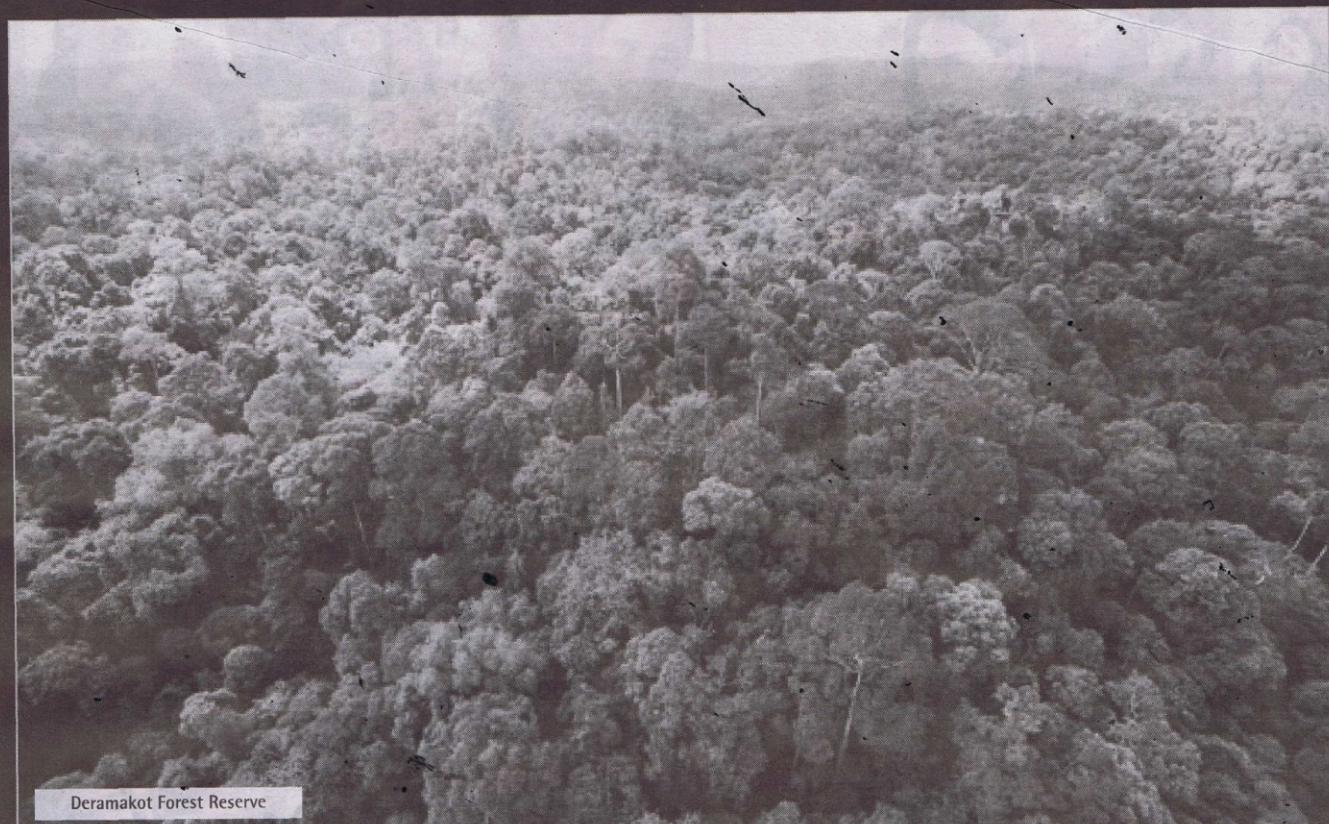


Sam



Logging has been drastically cut since a conservation drive was launched in 1997. And, according to state forestry director Datuk Sam Mannan, forest revenues have crashed by 97 per cent from a peak RM1.1 billion in 1979 to a mere RM175 million last year. He said the latest figures demonstrated the state government's commitment to ensure sustainable forest management (SFM) – full report on page 4

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Deramakot Forest Reserve

Sam: Drive to save forests on track

SANDAKAN: Logging has been drastically cut since a conservation drive was launched in 1997.

And forest revenues have crashed by 97 per cent from a peak RM 1.1 billion in 1979 to a mere RM175 million last year.

The latest figures demonstrated the state government's commitment to ensure sustainable forest management (SFM), state forestry director Datuk Sam Manan said.

Opening the 'Best of Both Worlds 2015', an international environmental education conference focusing on Ensuring Effective Delivery for a Sustainable Future held at the Rainforest Discovery Centre (RDC) here, he said since the SFM was adopted in 1997, following the success of the SFM model forest - Deramakot Forest Reserve, -the extent of logging and revenue have taken a deep plunge.

How much less? Sabah's forest revenue peaked in 1979 with RM1.1 billion which is equivalent to RM5.8 billion today.

And last year's revenue was recorded at only RM175 million - a mere three per cent of the revenue in 1979.

"I think this shows how very serious we are about sustainability," he said.

Sam said effort to ensure sustainable forest management has the strong backing of Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Haji Aman.

He added that his department began its journey towards SFM in 1989 with assistance from the German Agency for Technical Aid, GTZ.

"Besides the herculean task of getting the industry to change its mindset on what constitutes 'sustainability', we also have to inform the state government that revenue from the forestry sector was going to decline after SFM was implemented," he said, adding that the news shocked the government.

Sam also said the forestry industry in Sabah has had its fair share of trials and tribulations in implementing SFM.

He added that they have solved the most fundamental problems and were now facing new ones—not as tough as the earlier ones but challenging nonetheless.

"And I, as a layman, can expect to see all these in environmental education as well. The success stories you will be hearing from Nepal, Brazil, Australia, Laos, the USA, South Africa and Malaysia, all bear testament to the obstacles that all of you here have faced, will face or are still facing.

"And, this conference is an excellent platform from



Sam (seated, centre) with Dr Ismail (seated 2nd left) with overseas participants and forestry officials in a group photo

which we can learn from and share with each other the stories of the journeys that each of us took on the path towards sustainability.

I am very confident that these will be a source of inspiration to many of the participants here," Sam said.

The director of Forest And Environment Division, Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) Dr Ismail Harun said: "Protect and conserve all the green natural areas that we have managed well in a sustainable manner."

He said environmental education must be effective and reach as many people as possible.

"A learned and committed citizen will help us in protecting our natural resources and champion the cause for conservation," he said.

Dr Ismail also said with dwindling of forest resources happening throughout the globe, there was an urgent need

to act fast and effectively.

"We have to learn from each other on the best ways to ensure that the money, effort and time spent in environmental education programme is effective in developing nations of responsible citizens", he added.

Meanwhile, Sam expressed his gratitude to Dr Noor Azlin of FRIM and Professor Callie of University of South Africa for choosing the RDC as the venue to host this year's conference.

And, he also thanked the Sabah Wildlife Department, the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre and SMK Muhibbah Sandakan, for hosting the technical visits.

Present at the conference were participants and speakers from South Africa, Brazil, Nepal, Australia and US as well Sabah forestry officials. - (By Aliza Alawi & Rozallin Hashim)