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## News

Royal Belum State Park surroundings must also be protected  
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# Protecting buffer zones to make the cut

By **MANJIT KAUR**  
manjit@thestar.com.my

THE buffer zones of Royal Belum State Park must be protected to prevent logging and ensure the forest reserve makes it into the heritage list of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

Eco-tourism and Conservation Society Malaysia (Ecomy) co-founder and chief executive officer Andrew Sebastian said it was pointless for the state park to be accorded the status when just across the Gerik highway, logging continues at the Temenggor Forest Reserve.

He said academicians, NGOs and local communities had waited far too long for Temenggor to be protected along with Royal Belum.

"The stakeholders must demonstrate that they are able to sustain the forest reserve without promoting and investing heavily in logging," he said.

It was reported recently that Taman Negara, Royal Belum, the Klang Gates Quartz Ridge in Gombak and the Forest Research Institute Malaysia are on the tentative heritage list for Unesco.

Deputy Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Muhammad Bakhtiar Wan Chik said declaring these places, which had historical and heritage value, as Unesco World Heritage Sites would protect their biodiversity and uniqueness.

Andrew said Royal Belum was the largest contiguous rainforest complex in the country with biodiversity.

He said the state park, estimated to be 130 million years old was indeed a natural candidate for the

Surrounding areas of state park should be protected to demonstrate sustainability, says conservationist



A boat heading into the Royal Belum rainforest.

world heritage listing.

"The country should be proud and excited to do its best to ensure that the site not only makes it into the list, but continues to stay on the list.

"To make sure that happens, all involved must be on the same page," he added.

Andrew said the state government especially must make sure adequate research, active engage-

ment with local communities, as well as awareness of the rainforest (Royal Belum) is carried out.

He said to some degree, the Federal Government must also work together with academicians, NGOs and local communities to ensure they are supportive of the idea.

"Malaysians should be proud that we have sites like Royal Belum and it meets the criteria for Unesco

world heritage site listing," he added.

Andrew said Criteria 10 of the listing states that a site must contain the most important and significant natural habitat for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the science or conservation point of view.