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Sabah on track to meet green initiative

KOTA KINABALU: Sabah remains on target to achieve 30% of Total Protected Forests (TPA) under the Heart of Borneo (HOB) initiative undertaken by Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor said the state government aimed to expand it to 30% from the current 26% of the state's land area or 1.9 million hectares already gazetted as TPA under the HOB initiative.

He said 75% of the 1.9 million hectares of TPA was located within the Malaysian boundary in Borneo.

"Sabah has achieved significant progress in forest conservation since the inception of the HOB Initiative 14 years ago.

"The TPA expansion target is in line with Sabah's five-year development plan, the Hala Tuju Sabah Maju Jaya (SMJ) 2021-2025 which has included the HOB Initiative in the Green Infrastructure and Sustainability Networks," he said when opening the first virtual international conference on "HOB Initiative – Moving Forward in the New Norm" yesterday.

He explained that from the concerted efforts Sabah had maintained 50% of its landmass under forest cover and the state had increased forest covers to 65%, of which 52% were gazetted as forest reserves, parks and wildlife conservation areas.

The HOB project had seen the restoration of 2,000ha of forest reserves, he added.

Hajiji said Sabah was the first state in the country to launch its Good Regulatory Practice, emulating the move mooted by the Federal Government.

The Chief Minister also said Sabah would be implementing an integrated project that focused on environmental and land development management.

"The six-year project involves 1.6 million hectares within the HOB landscape, costing US$7.3mil (RM30.3mil) to be funded by the Global Environment Facility, under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

"Sabah will also be involved in another UNDP-funded programme on conservation finance," he said.