

# Rhino captured in Danum

## Kan Yaw Chong

KOTA KINABALU: A female Sumatran rhino was captured deep inside Danum Valley, Monday, raising a desperate last hope that experts may be able to use it to get some baby rhinos sired in captive breeding to avert a local extinction of the species in Sabah.

That is provided the new "girl" turns out to be cyst-free and reproductively healthy and fertile.

"The rhino fell into a pit trap dug at a site on a known rhino trail deep inside the Danum Valley Conservation Area about six hours' walk from Yayasan Sabah's Borneo Rainforest Lodge," Dr Sen Nathan, Asst Director-cum-Chief Veterinarian of Sabah Wildlife Department told *Daily Express*.

"It turned out to be quite an aggressive female and no report of injury on the animal had been received from the field so far," Dr Sen noted. The Bornean Rhino Alliance (BORA) and Sabah Wildlife Department set up the trap, after camera traps identified the presence of the rhino in the area and intensified this joint effort when the State Cabinet approved the capture of remnants of rhinos in Sabah's forests last year.

All rhinos captured will now be used for all-out captive breeding in Sabah or in proven zoos overseas to save them from dying out from old age or illegally hunted for their horns.

Extinction of the species appears certain because it's world population had plummeted to an all-time low of less than 100 and it is believed that most

females, even the wild ones roaming in protected areas, are probably cyst-infested and incapable of reproducing.

Experts at the International Sumatran Rhino Crisis Summit in Singapore last April issued an emergency and crisis recommendation to capture wild rhinos to sire as many and as fast as possible by using and leveraging on the most proven captive breeding experts and most successful facilities in the world.

The State Cabinet gave the green light to send Sabah's lone captive male rhino Tam to Cincinnati Zoo to mate with female, Suci, in June, and also allow experts from Cincinnati Zoo such as Dr Terri Roth to help mate Tam and any new female captured from Danum.

As of 7pm Monday night, the newly captured rhino remained in the pit, Dr Sen said.

"As far as I am concerned, it's good news only after we have translocated the animal safely to Tabin Wildlife Reserve Rhino Sanctuary," said Dr Sen.

The capture of the yet-to-be named rhino coincided with the visit to Sabah of world renowned documentary naturalist, Sir David Attenborough, who was in Danum Valley for the filming of "Conquest of the Sky" for Sky Vision, UK.

Director of Sabah Wildlife Department, Datuk Dr Laurentius Amu, said he was waiting for the report on the capture. BORA Executive Officer, Datuk Dr Junaidi Payne, said he'll get into Danum Valley Tuesday by helicopter to dispatch extra men to get the rhino out.