

Press release from Sabah Wildlife Department

For immediate release

FEMALE SUMATRAN RHINO RESCUED AND TRANSLOCATED FROM DANUM VALLEY TO THE BORNEO RHINO SANCTUARY IN TABIN WILDLIFE RESERVE

Danum Valley, 21 March 2014: A rare Sumatran rhino was successfully translocated late afternoon on Friday 21 from a very remote area in Danum Valley, to join a male (Tam) and a female (Puntung) rhinos at the Borneo Rhino Sanctuary (BRS) Facilities in Tabin Wildlife Reserve. Named Iman, after a small river near where she was caught, her rescue was a result of a year of intense efforts to make every last rhino in Malaysia count towards efforts to prevent the extinction of one of the world's most critically endangered species.

Datuk Seri Panglima Masidi Manjun, Minister of Culture, Tourism and Environment said "The State Cabinet agreed in March 2013 that the only way we can ensure that every Sumatran rhino in Sabah plays a role to save the species is to bring all of them into a managed, fenced facility, with the necessary local and global expertise and collaboration to breed them". "In February this year, the State Cabinet agreed that we should loan our male, Tam, to Cincinnati Zoo for breeding as part of that collaboration. If Iman proves to be fertile, there might be no necessity for Tam to fly to Cincinnati to mate with a 'foreign bride'. In fact the State Cabinet approval to send him to the US in the first place was conditional upon our failure to catch a fertile young female rhino at Danum within a reasonable time to mate with Tam," added Masidi. "We also hope that with the continued support and expertise on rhino reproductive biology from the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife based in Berlin, Germany, we will have baby rhinos very soon," concluded Masidi.

Sime Darby Foundation's Chairman, Tun Musa Hitam, who expressed jubilation with Iman's rescue and successful translocation efforts said "I would like to thank and congratulate everyone involved in this effort. All the hard work has paid off and we have another opportunity to help save this magnificent species from extinction".

Datuk Dr Laurentius Ambu, Director of Sabah Wildlife Department said "The Sumatran rhino is on the verge of extinction in Sabah. Bringing them into captive conditions allows us to maximize the chance that each rhino can help save the species". "My Department has been working on this with Borneo Rhino Alliance (BORA) and other partners including WWF Malaysia and Yayasan Sabah. Once Iman is settled into Tabin, we will review all the potential options on how she can best contribute to her species. We hope that this success will act as a boost to international collaboration on the Sumatran rhino, and through BORA try to engage with our counterparts in Indonesia," added Ambu. "I would like to congratulate BORA, WWF Malaysia, Yayasan Sabah, Sabah Forestry Department and my own staff and especially the Wildlife Rescue Unit who worked tirelessly on this rescue operation. Not

forgetting Erickson Air-Crane Inc, without the use of their huge Sikorsky S-64 Helicopter, this rescue would have been impossible. My sincere gratitude also goes to Sime Darby Foundation, which funded this rescue operation as well as the Malaysian Palm Oil Council, which funds our Wildlife Rescue Unit. This operation is all that serious wildlife conservation work should be about," concluded Ambu.

Ends

Picture legends:

Picture 1: Iman in the crate being positioned for the airlift inside the dense jungle of Danum Valley.



Picture 2: Iman in her jungle boma in the forest of Danum Valley.



Picture 3: Iman in her wallow.



Picture 4: Iman resting in her wallow.



Picture 5: Iman being airlifted out of Danum using a Sirkorsky S64 Sky crane.

