

Malaysia's last Sumatran rhino Iman dies, species now extinct in the country

NATION

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A file picture of Iman using a mineral lick in her stall when she was healthier.

KOTA KINABALU: The Sumatran rhino is now extinct in Malaysia, as the last known specimen, a cancer-ridden female named Iman died at the Borneo Rhino Sanctuary on Saturday (Nov 23).

"It is with great sadness that the Sabah Wildlife Department announces the death of Iman, the last Sumatran rhinoceros in Malaysia, at 5.35pm on Nov 23, 2019," said State Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Christina Liew.

"Its death was a natural one, and the immediate cause has been categorised as shock," she said.

"Iman was given the very best care and attention since her capture in March 2014 right up to the moment she passed.

"No one could have done more," Liew said.

She added that Iman had almost died on several occasions due to sudden massive blood loss from her uterine tumours over the years.

"The team at Tabin provided round-the-clock intensive support and successfully brought her back to good health and egg cell production on several occasions," she said.

Sabah Wildlife Department director Augustine Tuuga said Iman's death came sooner than expected.

"But we knew that she was starting to suffer significant pain from the growing pressure of the tumours into the bladder," he said.

The authorities are still hoping that it would still be possible to obtain some egg cells from Iman for the proposed Malaysia-Indonesia collaboration to protect the species.

However, the memorandum of understanding (MoU) has not been signed.

Liew said Sabah was still keen to pursue the MoU despite Iman's death.

"There are still ways in which we can collaborate based on our different experiences over the past decade," she said.

"For Sabah, that includes the management of female Sumatran rhinos with reproductive pathology, safe harvesting of gametes from living rhinos and cell culture," she added.

She said Iman and Tam (a male rhino that died on May 27 this year due to kidney and liver damage) both lived on as cell cultures.

TAGS / KEYWORDS:

Extinct , Sumatran Rhino , Iman , Death