

More plans made to save Javan leopard

The Forestry Ministry will soon draw up a strategy and action plan on Javanese leopard conservation to help save the species from extinction. The ministry has received recommendations from dozens of participants attending the National Conference on Javan Leopard Conservation, which was held recently at the Indonesia Safari Park in Cisarua, Bogor, West Java.

In the conference, various recommendations emerged regarding plans to conserve the Javan leopard. The recommendations were divided into four main areas: the conservation of the Javan leopard in its natural habitat, the role of conservation institutions (such as zoos and wildlife refuges), public awareness and budgets for conservation activities and research groups supporting conservation.

The two-day forum concluded that a studbook keeper on the Javan leopard in Indonesia was required to maintain the genetic quality of the animal in various conservation institutions.

It also highlighted the need for standard methods in surveying the population of the leopard, technical guidelines on the protection of the animals victimized in conflicts and the establishment of the Javan Leopard Forum.

“Our job is to formulate the feedback into a strategy and action plan,” said Agung Nugroho, a representative from the Directorate General of Forest Protection and Natural Conservation, when receiving recommendations from conference participants.

Indonesia Zoo and Aquarium Association (PKBSI) secretary-general Tony Sumampau said the conference was necessary to obtain input regarding measures to save the Javan leopard, the only remaining large cat on Java.

“This species must be saved, otherwise it will become extinct like the Bali tiger and the Javan tiger,” said Tony, who is also head of the Indonesian Wild Animals Conservation Forum (Foksi).

Owing to these concerns, a number of conservationists and journalists affiliated with the forum have made efforts to initiate the conference backed by the Forestry Ministry, the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, the PKBSI, the Indonesia Safari Park and the Harimau Kita Forum.

A Javan leopard researcher from the Conservation Development and Rehabilitation Research Center at the Forestry Ministry, Hendra Gunawan, said the Javan leopard topped the food chain in the forest ecosystem in Java.

There is no clear information on Javan leopard numbers in the wild. Forestry Minister Zulkifli Hasan estimated the leopards numbered less than 500 across Java.

“The Javan leopard is the key species that is very important for a balanced ecosystem,” said Zulkifli.

In his research, Hendra explained that problems between humans and the Javan leopard between 2001 to 2012 had tended to rise. In 2001, only one case was recorded, but in 2011 the number increased to 16 cases.

Competition between the predators and man cannot be separated from the struggle for land.

This has resulted in the leopard being further threatened in Central Java than in West Java.

The threat is due to the condition of forests — the Javan leopard’s habitat in Central Java — which is dominated by production forests directly connected with human activities.

“While on the other hand, West Java has more protected forests,” added Hendra.

The forum was declared by 10 representatives of various stakeholders from state-run forestry enterprise PT Perhutani, Foksi, Java Carnivore Awareness, the Indonesia Institute of Sciences (LIPI), the Bogor Agricultural Institute, the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group Indonesia and the Zoological Society of London.

“We will later work in line with guidelines in the strategy and action plan on Javan leopard conservation, which will be approved by the forestry minister. This forum is quite good because it accommodates every stakeholder involved in the conservation program,” said Tony.