

SABAH TO KEEP 60% OF STATE LAND AS FOREST

SANDAKAN: The state government is committed to its pledge of ensuring that at least 60% of the state's land area will remain under forest cover, Chief Minister Datuk Musa Aman said.

He said this quantum would ensure that the state's forests would continue to contribute to Sabah's economic and environmental well-being.

"We are serious in safeguarding whatever forests we have left and to ensure that any development would be on a sustainable basis," Musa said yesterday when launching the national-level World Forestry Day gathering at the Segaliud-Lokan Forest reserve.

He said the Sabah government was well aware of the importance of the state's forests as a source of biodiversity, a genetic pool and water catchment areas among others.

Noting that forest resources had contributed some RM166.2mil to the state economy in the first six months of this year, Musa said much of the biodiversity in Sabah's jungles had yet to be tapped.

"As such, the real economic value of our forests has yet to be fully realized," he added.

In ensuring that Sabah's commercial forest were properly utilized, the government was actively promoting strategies like reduce impact logging as part of sustainable forest government.

"We also stepping up research on our jungles while embarking on more projects involving the rehabilitation of logged over areas," he said.