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# Local communities' involvement key to central forest spine conservation

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THE aim was to bring people closer together through nature in an exhibition, and it was realised through a successful collaboration between various organisations at Central Market, Kuala Lumpur.

Improving Connectivity in the Central Forest Spine (IC-CFS) had collaborated with Forestry Department Peninsular Malaysia (FDPM), the Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan) and Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) to hold the IC-CFS Serangkai project that saw interactive, entertaining and educational booths open to the public.

IC-CFS, funded by Global Environment Facility and supported by the United Nations Development, is a collaborative effort between the government and international bodies to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem services in three critical landscapes (Perak, Pahang and Johor) of the Central Forest Spine.

The IC-CFS Serangkai project was a combined effort by the organisations to preserve ecosystem services and biodiversity in the Central Forest Spine's three most important regions in the three states," said Central Forest Spine section project manager Samsudin Musa.

"This project has been ongoing for eight years.

Graffiti artist Azrul Helmi Ibrahim painting animals of the Central Forest Spine at the IC-CFS-Serangkai event at Central Market, Kuala Lumpur.



"It is a huge project to ensure our forests are protected and managed well, and that the biodiversity is conserved," he said.

Samsudin said there was much concern over biodiversity, especially with regard to the future of our Malayan Tiger.

"A survey showed there were 250 to 340 Malayan Tigers in Malaysia as of 2014, but that has decreased to below 200 from 2016 to 2018," he said.

Through the sharing of audio and visual data during an exhibition, it emphasised the connection between humans and nature.

"Among the main threats to biodiversity are poachers and loss of habitat," said Samsudin.

"We lost many Malayan Tigers because of poaching.

"One of the most basic things we did was to step up enforcement.

"In Belum-Temenggor, we increased enforcement and managed to reduce poaching by 90%.

"The sheer presence of enforcement personnel had its effects," he added.

Samsudin said local communities such as the Orang Asli were encouraged to be part of the team as they were appointed as local

community rangers.

"They were trained and given monthly salaries to protect the biodiversity," he explained.

There were also community projects in Pahang to improve eco-tourism and the livelihood of locals there.

FDPM had taken the initiative to carry out a media trip in Kuala Lipis to promote eco-tourism.

Pahang Forestry Department and state project coordinator Muhd Syafuan Ismail said there was much progress in Pahang after activities such as gazettement workshops and community-based



Tree-planting tools and items involving three types of mediums which are red soil, compost and sand top soil.

eco-tourism in Kuala Lipis took place there.

"The communities promoted their own products like caving activities, kayaking and handicrafts.

"We only have to enhance their visibility."

Muhd Syafuan said one of the challenges they faced in Pahang was to enhance communication among the villagers.

"We have five villages in the area for the project, hence communication is important as well as their skills in marketing and selling their products," he added.