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## RM22m allocation for 117 conservation projects

**BUKIT MERTAJAM:** The National Conservation Trust Fund (NCTF), under the Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Ministry, has funded a total of 117 conservation projects involving an allocation of RM22.59 million.

Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad said of the total, 72 projects are in the implementation phase with a funding commitment of RM6.59 million, while 35 projects have been completed with an allocation of RM14.2 million.

"One of the completed projects is the Conservation of Seladang in the

Royal Belum State Park – Temenggor Forest Reserve Complex, implemented by the NGO Borneo Rhino Alliance in collaboration with the Wildlife and National Parks Department, and brought to the Second National Biodiversity Council.

"The meeting recognises the seladang as an endangered species of national importance, and a Seladang Conservation Management Plan will be developed to stabilise its population," he said in his closing speech at the Biology Exploration Workshop with the Seberang Perai

Community at Dewan Kampung Pisang, Cheruk Tokun here on Sunday.

His speech was read out by Forest Research Institute of Malaysia director-general Datuk Dr Ismail Parlan. Also present was Nature Sustainable Ecosystem Society (NEST) chairman Sulaiman Salikan.

The workshop was conducted through a collaboration between Think City, as the fund provider through the Seberang Perai Town Grant with NEST, as the implementing body, and the Seberang Perai City Council, which provides support in

terms of sustainable urban planning.

Nik Nazmi said data from the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the wildlife department found that a bird species that went extinct around the 1960s was the green peafowl (*pavo muticus*).

Species facing the threat of extinction include the Malayan crested argus and the mountain peacock-pheasant.

He added that the causes of extinction include loss of habitat due to logging and development, illegal trade in exotic birds as well as illegal

hunting and keeping of wild birds as pets.

"Birds play an important role in maintaining environmental balance, including serving as indicators of ecosystem health, with the number and type of birds in an area reflecting whether that area is healthy or polluted," he said.

Avian coordinator Dr Siti Norasikin Ismail said NEST had previously collaborated with the Shorebird Peninsular Malaysia project in carrying out coastal bird-watching activities. – Bernama