



GREEN ZONE: An aerial view of the stretch of land set aside for conservation and reforestation along the Sungai Pin riverbank in Sabah.

Oil palm firm sets aside land for rehab

KOTA KINABALU: A state-owned oil palm company is setting aside some 1,260ha of its riverside land for rehabilitation in efforts to set up the Kinabatangan "corridor of life".

Sawit Kinabalu Bhd Group, through subsidiary Borneo Samudera Sdn Bhd, signed a memorandum of understanding with WWF Malaysia yesterday to set aside land along the Sungai Pin riverbank following the success of rehabilitation efforts in the Batu Putih and Tanjung Bulat area of the Lower Kinabatangan.

Securing a wildlife corridor along the 20km stretch of the riverbank would also help develop the Batu Putih area into a nature-based tourism area, WWF National Programme director Dr Dionysius S.K. Sharma said.

Dr Sharma signed the memorandum with Sawit Group managing director Salim Mohammad, witnessed by Minister in the Chief Minister's Department Datuk Nasir Tun Sakaran, who represented Chief

Minister Datuk Musa Aman.

Dr Sharma said, so far, Borneo Samudera and two other companies had been involved in the rehabilitation effort to set up the corridor of life. Negotiations are still going on with several other companies.

He said the WWF would continue to educate owners of oil palm plantations along the Sungai Kinabatangan and its tributaries to participate in the project.

"We will continue to educate them on the need to allow wildlife to roam freely along the river through the corridor," he said, adding that a forest corridor would help connect isolated forest reserves, private plantation lands and the Kinabatangan Wildlife sanctuary.

Salim said he was happy with the first phase of rehabilitation works where the area rehabilitated was now home to about 16 species of mammals, including orang utans and proboscis monkeys, together with some 57 species of birds.