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Roadmap to protect forests

Malaysia among 28 countries to ink initiative at climate conference

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysia will be among 28 countries putting their signatures to an initiative to protect forests during the United Nations Climate Conference in Glasgow, Scotland.

As a key producer of palm oil, Malaysia has been involved in consultations over the past year on the Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade (FACT) Dialogue Roadmap of Actions.

The others who have agreed to the initiative include Japan, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union.

Malaysia is represented at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP 26, which started on Oct 31 and is scheduled to run until Nov 14.

Environment and Water Minister Datuk Seri Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man would lead the Malaysian delegation on Nov 9 and 10.

The roadmap is expected to be "unpacked" during an event today.

Among others, the purpose of the FACT dialogue is to promote sustainable development and trade of agricultural commodities while protecting and managing sustainably forests and other critical ecosystems.

It aims to agree on principles for collaborative action, a shared roadmap on sustainable land use and international trade, and to take action now to protect forests while promoting development and trade.

According to a joint statement issued by the conference on Sunday, the FACT Dialogue has identified an indicative roadmap of actions on four key and related areas of work – trade and market development; smallholder support; traceability and transparency; and research, development and innovation.

"We commit to continue our dialogue in an open and inclusive manner, based on our respective national interests, circumstances and capacities. We will meet regularly as ministers to give direction to this process," the statement added.

On Sunday, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, as co-host of the conference, announced the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, which brings together 110 countries from around the world to end deforestation by 2030.

The declaration is being touted as a way of halting and reversing forest loss by addressing the economic drivers and mobilising global finance into forest conservation and protection.

Malaysia hopes to reduce the intensity of greenhouse gas (GHG) emission across the economy by 45% based on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2030, which is 10% higher than the earlier target.

Malaysian Nature Society president Prof Dr Ahmad Ismail described FACT as a good initiative which Malaysia should emphasise on to maintain forests as pledged at past climate change summits.

"Malaysia is committed in its effort to maintain the natural forest cover of more than 50% of its total land mass as pledged at the 1992 UN Rio Earth Summit," he said.

He said through several other initiatives such as the ecological fiscal transfer scheme for the states to conserve and preserve large and continuous areas of forests, this was able to reduce human and wildlife conflict and also protect endangered species.

The forests involved are the Central Forest Spines in the peninsula and Heart of Borneo in Sabah and Sarawak. (Heart of Borneo also encompasses Kalimantan, Indonesia, and Brunei.)

Prof Ahmad said to ensure the commitment to preserve the environment, the plantation and related industries must pay for the cost of deforestation and maintaining forests.

He also suggested that the government introduce proper guidelines or a formula for it.

"How big an urban forest that we need and how the forest can help in terms of temperature, flood, carbon stocks, oxygen, absorbing GHG (greenhouse gas) emission," he added.

Citing Bukit Persekutuan, Bukit Gasing and Kota Damansara as examples, Prof Ahmad said the local authorities should pay for the forest conservation programme for the benefit of the urban population.

"If we expose the earth to deforestation, we will lose our carbon (gas).

"If we keep the forests, it will absorb carbon dioxide and help in managing climate issues and global warming besides saving the wildlife habitat," he added.



Fishermen secure boats in anticipation of monsoon

KOTA BARU: Fishermen in Kampung Pulau Gajah, Sabak in Pengkalan Chepa here, have begun making preparations, including bringing their boats to shore, with the arrival of the north-east monsoon when fishing activities are no longer safe due to the rough seas.

Some 40 fishermen got together in a "gotong-royong" to get their boats onto dry land to prevent them from being damaged by the