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THE public can play a proactive role in protecting the habitat of wildlife, especially that of tigers, says a conservationist.

Ecotourism and Conservation Society Malaysia (Ecomy) president and chief executive officer Andrew Sebastian said with this year being the Year of the Tiger, the public should get more involved directly, or indirectly.

He said it would be a great start, not only to protect the habitat of tigers, but also other wildlife as well as forests.

"There are many ways the people can help, by either reporting suspicious activities inside a forest or around it or by being vigilant of people buying animal products, wildlife meat and poaching activities.

"People can also call the Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan) to report such matters," he said.

Recently a statement from Kelantan Forestry Department director Abdul Khalim Abu Samah saying that logging activities could benefit the tiger population, created an uproar.

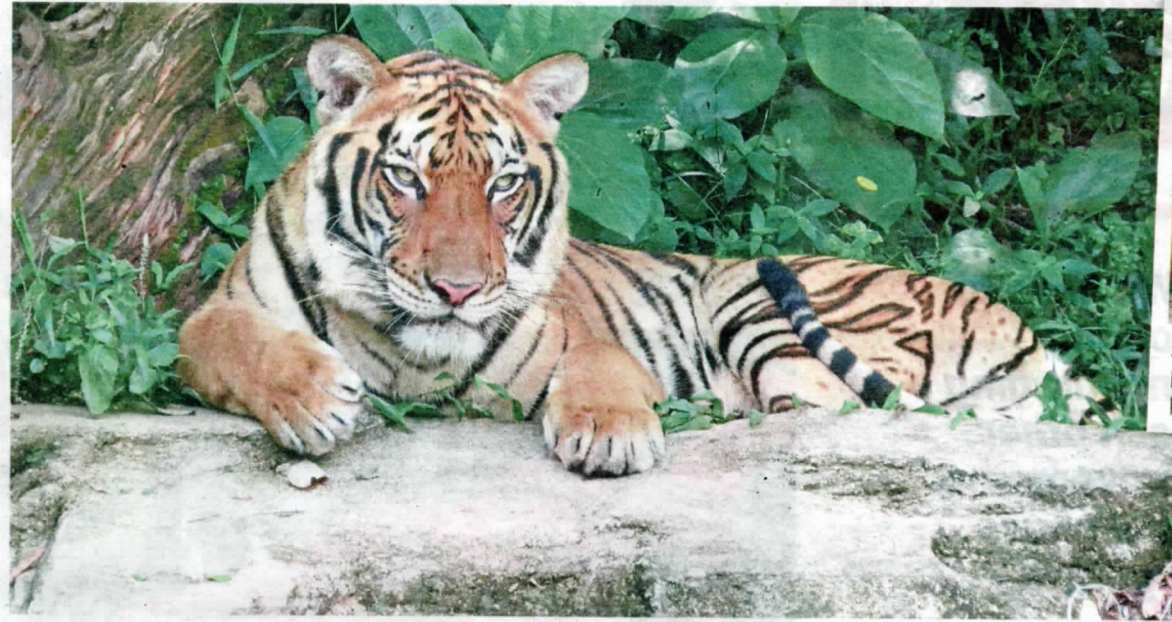
He had said that after an area was deforested, new vegetation would grow, encouraging the presence of new animal species that serve as food to tigers.

There are also issues arising, especially in Perak, on forest reserves being cleared in the name of development.

The proposed logging and tin mining project at Kenderong forest reserve in Hulu Perak is facing objection from environmental non-governmental organisation Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) which said the clearing of the

'Protect habitat of big cats this Year of the Tiger'

NGO also calls on public to be more proactive in saving other wildlife, forests



According to Andrew, if serious action is not taken now, tigers will be extinct when the next Year of the Tiger comes around.

245ha of forest land would be disastrous.

In a statement issued on Friday, SAM mentioned that the proposed site was within the primary linkage of the Central Forest Spine (CFS) region where it is reported

that the area is the habitat for endangered and nearly extinct species of wildlife like elephants, tigers, tapirs and sun bears.

Andrew is also calling on the public to be more involved in conservation campaigns to

protect forests against logging and plantation expansion.

He said people could be vigilant by sending authorities and NGOs information on forests being logged, cleared or so on.

"People must also get more pro-



Andrew wants more people to take part in conservation campaigns to protect forests.

active in pushing politicians to confront logging in critical 'tiger areas', and to stop clearing natural forests.

"If we don't start taking serious action now, when the next Year of the Tiger comes again, the animal will be extinct," he added.

Andrew said Mother Nature was sending out a clear message to protect the environment.

"With recent calamities happening, it is really time for people to speak up and take action to protect and conserve the environment as well as the wildlife," he concluded.