



## KERATAN AKHBAR

SURAT KHABAR	:	NEW STRAITS TIMES			
TARIKH	:	14/12/2020	MUKA SURAT	:	1
JABATAN	:	PERHILITAN			
KLASIFIKASI	:	PERHATIAN			



# FAREWELL, TIGRESS

MELUR, one of three celebrated Malayan tiger cubs greeted with much fanfare when they were born in Zoo Negara last year, has died. Only her brothers, Hebat and Wira, remain. This is not just a setback for the ailing zoo but also for the critically endangered species.

»» REPORTS BY NURADZIMMAH DAIM ON PAGES 2 & 3





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## HARDSHIPS

# TIGER CUB'S DEATH ANOTHER BLOW TO ZOO NEGARA

Female Malaysian tiger cub Melur was found drowned in the tiger enclosure's moat in March

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**Z**OO Negara, which has endured a lot of hardship this year due to the financial devastation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, has been hit with another setback — the death of a Malaysian tiger cub.

The *New Straits Times* has reliably learnt that a female cub, Melur, was found drowned in the zoo's tiger enclosure's moat in March.

Melur's birth, and that of her brothers Wira and Hebat, on Labour Day last year was an occasion for celebration and had shone a spotlight on the country's tiger conservation efforts.

Their births were hailed as a sig-

nificant success for the zoo's in-captivity breeding endeavours.

Melur, Wira and Hebat were the offspring of Zoo Negara's Kayla and Jati.

The three cubs were named by Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, the wife of the then prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Siti Hasmah is a staunch advocate of tiger conservation.

While details are scarce, it is understood that Melur's death was an accident.

Kuala Lumpur City Hall, which had contributed towards the zoo's tiger conservation efforts last year following the birth of the cubs, confirmed that it was informed about Melur's death.

"We were only told that one of the cubs died due to drowning," said a City Hall official.

Sources familiar with the issue told the NST that the zoo's staff were devastated by the tragedy.

The NST has contacted Zoo Negara representatives to obtain more details of the incident.

The wild population of the Malaysian tiger, regarded as a national icon, has been dwindling year by year.



An estimated 3,000 are believed to have roamed the forests of Malaya in the 1950s, but by 2014, their numbers were estimated to have fallen to about 250.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species has since moved the Malaysian tiger's status from "endangered" to "critically endangered".

The loss of Melur capped a terrible year for Zoo Negara.

Early this year, the Movement Control Order that was implemented to curb Covid-19 infections led to financial woes for the national zoo.

Zoo Negara is run by the Malaysian Zoological Society and depends largely on income from entrance fees for funding.

The zoo needs about RM1 million a month for operational costs, including for animal care, staff wages and utilities.

Media coverage of the zoo's dire financial straits have led to donations from the public as well as government assistance to keep the zoo afloat.

The zoo has appealed to the government to consider allowing it to reopen to the public.



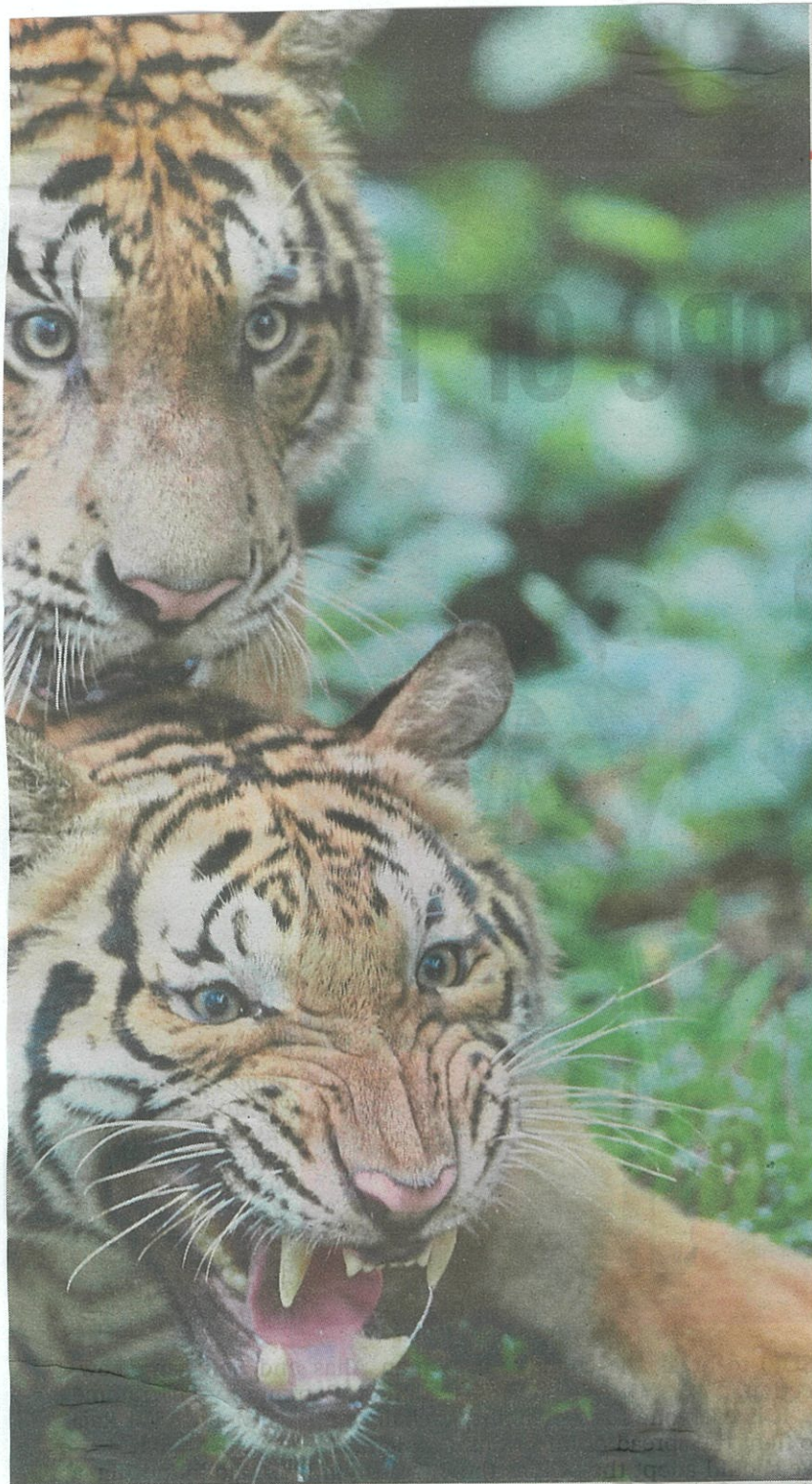
The three Malaysian tiger cubs that were born at Zoo Negara last year.

FILE PIC





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Malayan tiger cubs Wira (top) and Hebat, who are now 1½ years old, playing with each other at Zoo Negara recently. PIX BY EFFENDY RASHID

## Zoo blessed with 55 babies this year

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Hit by financial losses and the death of a prized Malayan tiger cub, Zoo Negara is ready to leave 2020 behind.

But the year has also offered a sliver of good news to the national zoo.

The absence of visitors for large parts of the year due to the enforcement of the Movement Control Order has apparently led to more mating among the animals, which has resulted in 55 new babies.

Malaysian Zoological Society deputy president Rosly@Rahmat Ahmat Lana acknowledged that 2020 has been a "roller-coaster year".

"The Covid-19 pandemic has caused major economic uncertainties, tougher than ever.

"This was made all the more apparent when Malaysians were required to stay home for months to avoid worsening the virus transmission.

"However, there has been some light relief in the form of the births of 55 baby animals in Zoo Negara."

He said the birth of so many animals was a blessing for Zoo Negara as well as Malaysians, and the births have been deemed a "record" of sorts.

The births include wallabies, nyala antelope, banteng (wild cattle of Borneo), Malayan porcupine, brush tailed porcupine, greater mousedeer, pademelon, Indian gaur, capybara and red lechwe antelope.

The zoo has also been blessed with hatchlings from the milky stork and Malay buffy fish owl.

"We have been truly lucky this year with the successful natural breeding of various species, including copperhead racers, mangrove snakes, granite pythons, albino pythons and Wagler's pit vipers.

"With no visitors around and

nothing else to do, our animals apparently decided to give mating a go, hence why we have new additions to our big family.

"They are all in perfect health.

"Zoo Negara is committed to taking good care of them and attending to their needs, from their food, supplements and vitamins up to medical care, as well as enrichment."

Rosly said the zoo's staff had carried out all necessary work to give Zoo Negara a facelift.

He said some structures were painted, trees were trimmed and repairs were done, adding that most preventive maintenance works had been put on hold.

He said Zoo Negara would regularly post pictures of the new babies on its official Instagram and Facebook pages.

The public would be able to subscribe to the zoo's YouTube channel next year so that the zoo could connect with potential vis-

### REVIVAL

## Kelantan zoo to reopen without 'costly' animals

**KOTA BARU:** People in Kelantan currently have to travel more than four hours to visit the nearest zoo, the Kemaman Recreation Park and Mini Zoo in Terengganu.

But that will soon be in the past as the state government plans to revive its zoo programme.

State Government, Health and Housing Committee chairman Dr Izani Husin said the zoo would be set up in the Kuala Krai district, the same area of the old zoo.

"The old zoo has been closed for almost 10 years. We had to close it due to (high) maintenance costs.

"Previously, there was no entrance fee and the state government could not afford the cost of maintenance, which was very high, forcing us to close the old zoo."

He said this was why the government planned to collect a reasonable fee from visitors to the zoo, which was being renovated and expected to open its doors in June.

"The new zoo will not have tigers, elephants, crocodiles and other high-maintenance ani-



A family visiting the Kuala Krai Mini Zoo and Museum in March 1994.

FILE PIC

mals. There will be fish, birds, deer and hedgehogs, among others."

The first and only zoo in the state was set up in Kuala Krai in

1964, but was shut down several years later.

The zoo was replaced with a bird park in 2007, but it, too, was closed two years later.



Cheetahs playing at Zoo Negara recently.

itors from all corners of Malaysia, he said.

Zoo Negara's Zoology, Veterinary and Giant Panda Conservation Centre director Dr Mat Naim Ramli said he hoped the large number of births could raise awareness of conservation efforts among the public.

"With more animals to care for, Zoo Negara needs more funding to aid in our commitment (to care

for the animals).

"Therefore, we are reviving our Adopt an Animal initiative so that people can adopt our animals, which helps support the zoo.

"For more information, visit Zoo Negara's website or any of our social media platforms.

"Our 'cute-lings' shall welcome you with warmth and joy, and they are looking forward to seeing you for the first time."