



Sabah Forestry Department

Mangroves at the mouth of the Kinabatangan River.

# Lower Kinabatangan-Segama Wetland receives international recognition

The Lower Kinabatangan-Segama Wetlands in Sabah has been officially designated as Sabah's first and Malaysia's largest Ramsar site at the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar COP10) in Changwon, Korea on 28 October 2008.

This is the 6th Ramsar site in Malaysia, but the new listing will make the area not only Sabah's first Ramsar site but also Malaysia's largest, extending over 78,803 hectares of mangrove forests and peat swamp on Sabah's east coast. Dr. Nick Davidson, Deputy Secretary General, Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention awarded the official certificate to Mr. Abdul Fatah Amir, Director of Sabah Biodiversity Centre (SBC) during the Ramsar COP 10.

The site comprises three contiguous forest reserves: Trusan Kinabatangan Forest Reserve (40,471 ha), Kulamba Wildlife Reserve (20,682 ha), and Kuala Marup and Kuala Segama Forest Reserve (17,650 ha). This area is even larger than the total area of previously designated Ramsar sites five in all in Malaysia (55,355 hectares).

The SBC, which was established under the Sabah Biodiversity Council this May, as stipulated in the Sabah Biodiversity Enactment 2000, played a pivotal role in the application process to mobilize and coordinate a number of agencies including the Forestry Department (the custodian of the site), Wildlife Department, Lands and Surveys Department, Fisheries Department, Department of Irrigation and Drainage, Natural Resources Office, Science and Technology Unit, Economic Planning Unit, and Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

The site was recognized as an internationally important wetland for its good representation of the coastal mangrove forest and rare peat swamp forest containing a number of endangered and threatened species such as the Sumatran rhinoceros, proboscis monkey, tembadau, Borneo pygmy elephant, and Storm's stork. The site was also recognized as ecologically important to provide important spawning and nursery grounds for fish and prawns.

The Bornean Biodiversity and Ecosystems Conservation Programme Phase II (BBEC II), supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), initiated to establish this Ramsar site early this year and will continue its support in the preparation of a management plan for the site.

The Ramsar Convention is informal name of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat. The Convention is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable utilization of wetlands. Malaysia ratified the Convention on 10 March 1995 and its national focal point agency is the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. The other 5 Ramsar sites in Malaysia are Kuching Wetlands National Park (Sarawak), Pulau Kukup (Johor), Sungai Pulai (Johor), Tanjung Piai (Johor), and Tasek Bera (Pahang).

