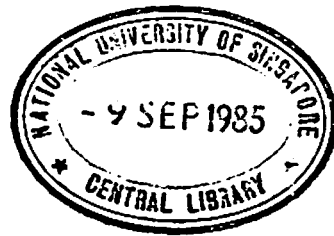


MALAYSIAN WILDLIFE

A Personal Perspective

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moved, and they have to be shot. In Perak alone, three elephants had to be shot in 1976; they were approximately fifty years old and each weighed close to four tons. State Wildlife and National Parks Departments were still issuing orders to rangers to kill rogue elephants, in 1979, and in 1980 a three-ton bull was shot near Air Hitam in Negri Sembilan. The elephant was believed to have attacked two people several weeks previously. Unfortunately, the victims of damage by the elephants become importunate in their demands for the removal of the elephants, although it is the people who are the intruders. Not everyone sympathizes with the slaughter of elephants, however, as the accompanying letter, published in the New Straits Times, on February 23, 1976, and emanating, appropriately, from Batu Gajah, shows:

'Another jumbo has been shot dead, (NST Feb. 3). Malaysian elephants have not yet been registered as a threatened species in The Red Data Book published by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. If the shooting does not stop they too will join their cousins — the Javan rhino. The last of this one-horned rhino (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) was killed in Perak in 1932. Other species of rhino like the Sumatran rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) and the Indian rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) have not been spotted in the wild the last 20 years.

'Hunters and poachers have been killing our wild animals, and today the people in the Game Departments have joined them. Elephants are killed just because they have destroyed a few trees in some estates. If the planters can plant thousands of trees, why can't they dig trenches to discourage the elephants from entering their estates?

'We have a Taman Negara which is 1,677 square miles wide, but we have yet to hear of elephants caught and sent to this park. We have brought elephants from India for this purpose but somehow that was the only news heard of so far.

'It is a great pity that our elephants have no place to go, places safe enough for them to live in. Even in the zoos, animals are threatened with death. Many of the zoo-keepers are formerly labourers who have had no proper training in looking after animals. In fact, imprisoning the animals is definitely not the way to preserve our wildlife.

'Unless a nation-wide campaign is mounted to save our wild animals, the wild elephants in particular, are doomed. If the present trend of killing the jumbos does not stop, the last of our elephants will be gone before the Government can even find the spot for the second Taman Negara.'

In the same area, Batu Gajah, three elephants rounded up in operation 'Save the Gajah' — an attempt to move the elephants to areas not affected by jungle clearing — were visited by wild members of their herd in what seemed to all intents and purposes to be a rescue attempt. The elephants were caught

The Plunder of Endau-Rompin

IN MANY WAYS THE STORY of Endau-Rompin is prophetic for wildlife conservation in Malaysia. The outcome of efforts to prevent logging in the Park reflects the difficulties inherent in protecting the forests of Malaysia and at the same time it will have a profound effect on future attempts. The saga began early in 1977, with an announcement by Mr S.T. Sundram, Deputy Secretary-General of the Science, Technology and Environment Ministry, that the 202,300 hectare (500,000 acre) Endau-Rompin Park, sitting astride southern Pahang and north-east Johore, would be developed as a wildlife reserve and tourist attraction, later in the year. The proposal was in accord with the Malayan Nature Society's 'Blue-print for conservation in Peninsular Malaysia', published in 1974. In fact, the proposal had been under consideration for many years. Tan Sri Ong Kee Hui, Minister of Science, Technology and Environment, reaffirmed, in March 1971, that Endau-Rompin would be made into a National Park, and he was quoted as stating 'in the Endau-Rompin area, we have the biggest concentration of the Sumatran Rhinoceros which is listed among the endangered species'. However, some intimation that the plans were not entirely adequate was given by Peter Scott, writing on the Sumatran Rhinoceros in a special issue of the *Tigerpaper*, devoted to Malaysia. The *Tigerpaper* is published by the Regional Office of FAO, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, in Bangkok; its aims are to function 'as a vehicle for the exchange of information on Wildlife and National Parks Management in the region'. Peter Scott pointed out that 15-20 of the estimated total population of 25-40 Sumatran Rhinoceros (*Badak berendam* — *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) in West Malaysia were believed to be in the Endau-Rompin area. However, he indicated that authority for management decisions relating to the proposed Park would reside ultimately with the State Governments of Pahang and Johore. Although the Federal Game Department was to be a member of an advisory committee, it appeared that the committee would be heavily biased in favour of exploitation. Furthermore, it seemed likely that the proposed inner

sanctuary, amounting to 64,800 hectares (250 sq miles), of the Park, which would be set aside for conservation purposes, would not be adequate, because the range of the rhinoceros was believed to extend into an outer buffer zone which was to be subject to logging and mining.

In an article by Kevin Rafferty, which appeared in the *Business Times* — a new Malaysian daily newspaper — in April, 1977, a disturbing suggestion was made that even the core area was 'under attack'. These fears were echoed and confirmed by Dr Francis Ng, Secretary of the Malayan Nature Society, who claimed in May, 1977, that the Pahang State Government had actually issued licences for the commercial logging of the inner sanctuary area of the Park. In doing so, the Pahang State Government was disregarding recommendations contained in the Third Malaysia Plan, the Government's master plan for development. Dr Ng made his announcement on the occasion of the publication of an advertisement placed in the daily newspapers jointly by the Malayan Nature Society, the World Wildlife Fund Malaysia, the Malaysian Zoological Society, the National Geographical Association of Malaysia, the Malaysian Society of Marine Sciences and the Malaysian Forestry Society. The purpose of the advertisement was to generate public interest in the Park and support for its preservation. On May 10, the *New Straits Times* published an editorial entitled 'Save this Park'. The editorial drew attention to the reality of the situation, that the States had the final word on the use of their land. The editorial pointed also to the irreversible damage to the river systems that might result from the logging activities. Furthermore, the Pahang State Government was violating its own recommendations, made jointly in 1972 with Johore and the Federal Government, for the development of the Park. On the same day a statement from the World Wildlife Fund, to the same effect, also appeared in the *New Straits Times*.

The response to the publicity given to the logging of Endau-Rompin was both enormous and encouraging. On the following day, Adibah Amin, author of a popular feature 'As I was passing', which appears regularly in the *New Straits Times* under her *nom-de-plume* 'Sri Delima', devoted her entire article to the plight of the animals in Endau-Rompin. Her article is reproduced below. Its significance was that *Sri Delima* is widely read; some members of her reading public might not ordinarily read a news feature on parks or conservation.

'There is an age-old rule that says: not a leaf, not a bud, not the tiniest branch of a tree is to be broken off lightly.

'You must first say with all reverence: "Guardian of Nature's Green, permit me to take this for my need." And in your heart you must be certain it is truly need, not greed.

'The trees of the jungle can be cut down, to make way for settlements and

plantations, or to be used or sold as timber.

'Go about it the right way and Nature's Guardian gladly gives his blessing. But go beyond the limits of legitimate need, and he will show his anger in terrible floods and equally terrible droughts.

'The folks of old who made the rule to be passed down the generations had never heard of ecological balance.

'Perhaps it was experience that gave them the wisdom. Or perhaps it was a sort of intuitive knowledge that came from closeness to Nature, a closeness we are fast losing.

'Still we could sense the harm we had done and so resolved to make amends before it was too late.

'We drew up a scheme for a national park on Pahang-Johore territory — 500,000 acres of jungle to be kept intact.

'We put it in the Third Malaysia Plan. We talked about it, we enthused, we dreamt dreams.

'It would be a magnificent park, our Taman Endau-Rompin. Safe within its boundaries would flourish the rich variety of animals and plants that is Malaysia's very own.

'The tiger, the *seladang*, the rhinoceros, now threatened with extinction, would have a chance to live and breed in security and freedom.

'We would come to the Taman, we and visitors from abroad, and delight in the vast stretches of virgin green, the sense of space and the feel of innocent, frolicsome life all around us.

'At night in the "hides" we would sit up and wait very quietly for some character from the jungle to come gliding or leaping or lumbering or waddling past.

'The sounds of the jungle would fill our ears — plaintive, jubilant, eerie, reassuring, cacophonous, harmonious. A strange peace would envelop us as we merged into those sounds and lost our snooty homo-sapiens separateness.

'It would not really matter if all we saw on that vigil was a pair of eyes gleaming in the dark or a swiftly flitting form. It would be wealth enough, and we would go away content.

'Thus we dreamt our dreams. They took a long time to even begin to come true, and meanwhile loggers with previously granted licences continued to cut down trees within the boundaries of the Taman-to-be.

'Never mine, said we, it was just in the peripheral parts. The large central area would remain sacrosanct. Had not all concerned promised this?

'But now new logging licences have been issued for this central area, and soon the slashing will start.

'Our environmental experts have joined together to make an appeal against this. If we add our voices to theirs, we can still save the park.

'Some will call us crazy. "Stop logging to save a dozen rhinoceros? Who cares if the *Dicerorhinus Sumatrensis* is the last of a line dating back 30 million years.

' "Come off it, we must live in the present and look to the future."

'But in this case, if unlimited logging for immediate profit is living in the present, we cannot at the same time be looking to the future.

'Granted we do not care if we lose all the flora and fauna of our forest heritage. Granted we do not care if our children's children read about Sang Harimau, Sang Seladang and Sang Badak and consign them to the category of dinosaurs.

'The ancient rule still stands, the rule made by the intuitive ecologists of old.

'We would do well to heed it: to ask permission of the Guardian of Nature's Green, and to look in our hearts and draw the delicate line between need and greed, between development and devastation.'

On the very same day, the Pahang State Government was reported, in the Business Times, to be adhering to its decision to extract valuable timber from the proposed Endau-Rompin National Park. Datuk Wan Sidek bin Haji Wan Abdul Rahman, State Secretary of Pahang, told a press conference in Kuantan that the area was too rich in timber to be left unexploited. He said that the State Government was faced with the conflicting demands of human progress and conservation of wildlife. He made it clear that the State Government gave higher priority to the socio-economic development of the area. He went on to say that the State Government was not opposed to the concept of the Park, but felt that it should be developed only after the valuable timber had been extracted. Datuk Wan Sidek claimed that the State had asked the Game Department to consider ways of moving the rhinoceros to another area if the need arose. A few days later (May 13), Mr Ken Scriven, Director of the World Wildlife Fund (Malaysia), went on record as having declared that it was now up to the public to decide the fate of the Park and the Sumatran Rhinoceros. The public had been presented with the views of conservation groups and they were aware of the views of the Pahang State Government. However, he did remind the public that the Park was the source of several rivers which were vital for regional drainage, irrigation and water supply. Disturbing the forest might have profound effects on the amount of water available to the people and for agriculture. As an example, Mr Scriven pointed out that a reservoir in Johore had dried up following the clearance of surrounding areas.

Letters continued to flow into the newspapers. One of them, published in the New Straits Times on May 19, made the point that the logging of Endau-Rompin was not a choice between human welfare and animal survival, as only a

few loggers were likely to benefit from the destruction of the Park. On the other hand many people were likely to be affected to their detriment by the logging activities. The same writer also expressed his dismay that the same mistakes that had been made in the Jengka Triangle were being repeated in the Pahang Tenggara, the vast development scheme in southern Pahang which includes part of the Endau-Rompin forest. Another letter, published on the same day, bore 165 signatures. Four other letters in the same issue, expressed their regret over the policies of the Pahang State Government regarding Endau-Rompin.

Concerned individuals and groups were not the only ones to object to the logging of Endau-Rompin. On May 20, the New Straits Times reported that the presidents of the Penang Malay, Chinese and Indian Chambers of Commerce had issued a joint appeal to Pahang to reconsider its decision to permit logging in the Park. The three business leaders also called upon the logging companies to demonstrate their sense of nationalism by putting aside their short-term profit considerations. Logging, they said, would lead to the destruction of a heritage which is incalculable in monetary terms. Emanating also from Penang, was a letter adding the voice of the Penang Branch of the Malayan Nature Society to the growing number of protests. Christine Betterton, Honourary Secretary of the Penang Branch, expressed concern that if Federal policy on land could be flouted once, as at Endau-Rompin, then the future of planned land development throughout the country is in jeopardy. At the same time the chairman of the Branch announced the launching of a campaign to dissuade the Pahang Government from continuing its present practices.

The publicity given to the logging in the Endau-Rompin Park led to a feature article by Ng Poh Tip in the New Straits Times of June 13. The article drew attention to the plight of the Sumatran Rhinoceros. Although there are less than twenty rhinos left in the proposed Endau-Rompin National Park, they are believed to be a breeding population. The rhinos are vulnerable to interference and hunters because they tend to use the same wallows and tracks, so that their movements are predictable. The rhinos are hunted mainly for their horns, which are reputed to have aphrodisiac properties, but other parts of the animal find a ready market. A Sumatran Rhinoceros reserve was established some years ago at Sungai Dusun in Selangor, but the area is small, only 4,047 hectares (10,000 acres), and there are believed to be only three to five animals there. The last specimen of the rarer Javan Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) in Malaysia was shot in Perak in 1932, and this species survives only in the Hujung Kulon Reserve in western Java. In the same issue of the New Straits Times (June 13), it was reported that the influential organization, UMNO Youth, was protesting the logging. The acting leader of UMNO Youth, Haji Suhaimi bin Datuk Kamaruddin, stated that his

organization wanted development projects which did not result in adverse effects on the environment. He said that the current drought may have been due to under-protection of the environment and the indiscriminate felling of trees in the past.

It was not surprising that, with such an outcry against the exploitation of Endau-Rompin, the Government should be aware of the issue and taking active steps to solve the problem. On Monday, June 20, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment announced that it was keeping open all channels to the Pahang Government in the hope that it would reconsider its decision on the logging issue. Mr S.T. Sundram, Deputy Secretary-General of the Ministry, revealed that the Ministry was drafting legislation to establish the national parks, nature reserves, nature monuments, and wildlife sanctuaries, recommended by the Third Malaysia Plan. However, the legislation had not been passed by Parliament at that time, and, ominously, two States had yet to accept the plan, although it was not revealed which States these were. It became known later that the States were Perak and Pahang. Included in the legislation were the proposed Belum Wildlife Reserve of 215,000 hectares (531,000 acres) in Perak, the Endau-Rompin Park, and the Ulu Trengganu Wildlife Reserve which covers 117,000 hectares (288,000 acres). In the same report, the Chief Game Warden, Encik Mohd. Khan bin Momin Khan confirmed that there were definitely rhinoceros at Endau-Rompin, and possibly as many as fourteen. Ominously though, one rhino had been seen within sound of logging operations. On a more encouraging note, it was reported in the same issue of the New Straits Times that evidence of the presence of the Sumatran Rhinoceros had been found in the Gunung Mulu National Park in Sarawak. The evidence was obtained by members of the British expedition studying the tropical rain forest there.

Within the next ten days the Environmental Protection Society and the Perak Branch of the Malayan Nature Society joined others in their protest against the logging. The president of the Perak Branch, Mr Robin Arumugam, questioned whether the remains of the Park which were left after the logging operations had finally ceased, would fulfill the criteria of a National Park. On July 7, the New Straits Times carried an article headed 'Stop "full-speed" logging in Endau-Rompin'. The article reported criticisms of the logging companies by Dr Leong Yueh Kwong, chairman of the Penang Branch of the Malayan Nature Society. Dr Leong claimed that the loggers were removing more than 1,016 tonnes (1,000 tons) of timber each day in an effort to extract as much from the forest as possible before they were compelled to cease operations. The logging companies were apparently working night and day and, as a result, the important core area of Endau-Rompin would be destroyed within two months.

On July 9 the New Straits Times printed a letter from Rokiah Talib and

Mazidah Zakaria, lecturers in Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Malaya. The authors mentioned a study that they had conducted of the Langat River Basin in Selangor. Their study revealed that the pollution of the river by development and agro-industries had deprived a significant number of people in the rural population of an important source of protein — fish. The writers suggested that a similar deprivation may occur along the Sungai Endau and Sungai Rompin as a result of logging in the Endau-Rompin forests. This would hardly be a contribution to human welfare, which the Pahang State Government claimed to be uppermost in their minds when they sanctioned logging within the Park.

The same theme was taken up by the Pahang Tenggara Development Authority responsible for the development of a vast area of southern Pahang. By 1990, the population of this area was projected to be 500,000. It has one of the lowest rainfalls in the country. The main water supply was Sungai Rompin; one tributary of the Rompin was already polluted with sludge from oil-palm mills. If the remaining branch of the river was to be polluted by logging activities in Endau-Rompin, the whole scheme would be in danger. An editorial in the New Straits Times of July 14 focussed on the pollution of the river system and the depletion of a source of protein for the poorest section of the community, the rural population. The editorial asked if this was putting the welfare of the people first, as the Pahang State Government had claimed.

In the meantime, the Selangor Branch of the Malayan Nature Society had protested the logging and on July 19, the Penang Branch of the Malayan Nature Society sent to the Pahang State Government the signatures of 1,584 people protesting the logging of Endau-Rompin. A copy of the letter and signatures was sent to the Prime Minister's Department. The petition claimed to represent a broad cross-section of Malaysian society and it accused the Pahang State Government of having done little to justify its destruction of Endau-Rompin. The statement went on to say that Pahang had made no effort to allay fears that large-scale erosion, pollution, silting, flooding and the death of wildlife would follow its policies.

On the same day, the matter was raised in the Malaysian Parliament. Mr Lee Boon Peng, representing Mantin, asked the Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment if land conservation schemes included in the Third Malaysia Plan were to be subject to the short-term objectives of individual State Governments. In his reply, the Minister expressed the hope that they would not, but he also went on to say that as the Endau-Rompin area had not yet been gazetted as a wildlife sanctuary, he could not guarantee that the forests of Endau-Rompin would not be subject to the actions of the State Government. In reply to Encik Hishamuddin bin Haji Yahya from Maran, Tan Sri Ong, the Minister, admitted that there was nothing that the Federal

Government could do at this stage. Encik Mohamed Sophe Sheik Ibrahim (Kepala Batas) then asked if sanctions could not be imposed against the Pahang Government. The Minister answered this by saying that all projects involving land would first have to be discussed in the National Land Council. Encik Sophe's request for the use of sanctions drew the first letter of protest in favour of logging the Park, since the controversy had started. The letter, published in the New Straits Times on August 1, was signed 'Pembela'. It clearly objected to any interference on the part of the national government in state affairs but went on to remind readers that large parts of Pahang had already been set aside as National Parks. The letter was less convincing when it asserted that the State of Pahang needed the revenue from the logging operations.

The Selangor Branch of the Malayan Nature Society confirmed, in a letter in the New Straits Times of August 4, that logging was going ahead 'at full speed' in Endau-Rompin. The letter pinpointed the area that was being logged — within the inner sanctuary. Furthermore, this area formed the headwaters for one of the few remaining unpolluted water sources for the Pahang Tenggara. On August 6, a meeting was held in Petaling Jaya to protest the logging. The meeting was attended by approximately 150 conservationists, members of the Selangor Graduates Society and the Environmental Protection Society.

On August 8 the Malayan Nature Society published its most extensive comment on the Endau-Rompin question, in the form of a letter to the New Straits Times. The Society presented a number of cost/benefit estimates for the logging operation. The calculations revealed that in all probability less than a thousand people would benefit directly from the logging, and for a limited period of time. The Society also listed the adverse effects of the destruction of the area, to be set against the benefits:

- 1 Increased run-off of water, erosion, flash floods, downstream silting, water pollution, loss of aquatic life.
- 2 Destruction of the habitat of the Sumatran Rhinoceros, dispersal of the population, little further opportunity for breeding.
- 3 Extinction of many herbaceous plant species in the core area.
- 4 Impairment of the scenic attractiveness of the Park.
- 5 Adverse social effects on the people living downstream of the Park, because of pollution.
- 6 Damage to the reputation of Malaysia as a nation conscious of conservation issues.

The Society's letter also brought out the point that the Park, once logged, could not be utilized again for 55 – 70 years. The profits from the operation should therefore be divided by this time span in order to arrive at a realistic assessment of its rewards. Looked at this way, the profits might well be

exceeded by the cost of the damage done to the Park and its rivers. Furthermore, income from the use of the area as a Park, unlike that from logging, would be recurrent, and likely to increase as the years go by.

Endau-Rompin came up for discussion in the Malaysian Parliament again in August. The Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment, replying to a question, stated that the logging operations could affect the water supply to the Pahang Tenggara and also the irrigation of 16,200 hectares (40,000 acres) of padi. The problem of Endau-Rompin would be presented to the Cabinet and to the National Forestry Council, he said. On Tuesday, August 23, the Minister, Tan Sri Ong Kee Hui visited the Endau-Rompin forests, accompanied by other officials and the Chief Game Warden. Two days later, Endau-Rompin, for the first time, became front-page, banner-headlines news, in the New Straits Times. The headline 'More permits to log Park' was capped by the information that 1,000 acres a week were being cleared. The article announced that eight licences covering 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres) had been issued to date, and that almost that amount of the important core area had already been logged. The main logging camp was two miles inside the core area. The 12,140 hectares (30,000 acres) set aside for logging would be completely logged in three or four months.

On the same date (August 25) the MP for Kuala Lumpur Bandar, Mr Lee Lam Thye, expressed the disapproval of his party (DAP) over the reported additional logging, and called upon the Prime Minister, Datuk Hussein Onn, to intervene. Meanwhile, the Pahang State Government remained evasive. The State Secretary, Datuk Wan Sidek bin Wan Abdul Rahman said that he preferred to leave discussion of Endau-Rompin to Mentri Besar Datuk Muhammad Jusoh. This was unfortunate because Datuk Muhammad refused to meet the press. Former Pahang Mentri Besar, Datuk Wan Abdul Aziz bin Ungku Haji Abdullah, however, had no hesitation in expressing his disapproval of the issuing of more licences. The State Government was disregarding public opinion, Datuk Wan Abdul Aziz, who is Chairman of the Pahang Branch of the Malayan Nature Society, asserted.

A meeting at the Majestic Hotel in Kuala Lumpur on August 25 resolved to seek an interview with the Prime Minister. The meeting represented the Malayan Nature Society, Malayan Forestry Society, Malayan Society of Marine Sciences, Environmental Protection Society of Selangor and the Selangor Graduates Society. Mr Lee Lam Chye, MP for Kuala Lumpur Bandar, was also present. It was resolved that the delegation to the Prime Minister should include representatives also from the Malaysian Soil Science Society, World Wildlife Fund Malaysia and the National Geographical Society.

An article on the front page of the New Straits Times of September 5 announced that licences to log another 2,400 hectares (6,000 acres) of the

Park would be issued soon. The article also gave some insight into the reasons behind the logging. Apparently the logging contractors had already paid the concession holders M\$5 million, and this was reason enough to justify the frantic pace of the logging. The State Government's share of the revenue from the logging was expected to be M\$7 million. The article indicated that the latest organization to protest the logging was the National Association of Muslim Students.

The editorial of the September 5 issue of the New Straits Times was entitled 'Rompin Plunder'. The editorial was responding to the information contained in another article, that the Pahang State Government was about to issue logging licences for another 2,400 hectares (6,000 acres) in the Endau-Rompin National Park. In the opinion of the editors this action was a rebuff to the Federal Government and not in the interests of the State or the nation. The rulers of Pahang had shown themselves unresponsive to public opinion in Pahang and Malaysia. Several days later it was reported, in the Business Times and the New Straits Times, that the Federal Government would intervene to stop the logging at Endau-Rompin if the Pahang Government did not do so soon. However, at the same time, the Pahang State Action Council was reminding heads of departments not to issue statements to the press regarding Endau-Rompin. Reporters who called at the Mentri Besar's office were advised not to follow up on the story. The Federal Government was under pressure again from UMNO Youth, which had planned to send a delegation to the Deputy Prime Minister Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to insist that further logging be suspended. Dr Mahathir was also Chairman of the National Forestry Council. The Acting Leader of UMNO Youth, Haji Suhaimi bin Dato Kamaruddin referred to the fact that although Kuala Lumpur was the only city in the world with a Forest Reserve (*Bukit Nanas*) in its midst, this had already been desecrated by a cable car, supposedly to make it more attractive to tourists. He pointed to the destruction of forests in Malaysia as opposed to the planting of trees in Western countries. *Bukit Nanas*, also known as Bukit Weld, started as forty-three acres of virgin forest reserve, set aside in 1906. Its original acreage has been whittled away until only twenty-six acres now remain. The preservation of these last acres will be well worth the effort, providing Kuala Lumpur with a unique resource for educational and recreational pursuits.

One point that emerged for the first time in the September 8 issue of Business Times, was that logging in the Endau-Rompin area had been going on since 1965, before, in fact, the proposal to create the Park had been mooted.

The Endau-Rompin controversy coincided with the adoption in early September of a national forestry policy by the National Forestry Council. The policy covered all aspects of forest management and reflected the fact that less than 16 million hectares (40 million acres) of forest land remained. The policy

also took into account the obsolete forest laws which hitherto had prevailed. Consideration was given also to the need for enforcement of the policy. The problem of re-forestation was also addressed; apparently only 50,600 hectares (125,000 acres) of the 567,000 hectares (1.4 million acres) that had been exploited in the previous six years had been regenerated. Heeding this, the Council had recommended a limit, to logging, of 117,000 – 138,000 hectares (290,000 – 340,000 acres) a year. This limit was based on a growth cycle of seventy years. Thus, only one-seventieth of the total forest area of each State should be logged each year. An editorial in the New Sunday Times of September 4, commented on Deputy Prime Minister Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's address to the National Forestry Council the previous week. Dr Mahathir had reminded the council that timber, unlike tin and oil, was a renewable resource. However, at the present rate of logging this resource would be exhausted within twelve years. In the past twenty years, the editorial stated, only 219,000 hectares (540,000 acres) had been reforested, compared with 275,000 hectares (680,000 acres) now being harvested annually.

On Friday, September 16, the University of Malaya Graduates' Society expressed its disappointment over the indifferent attitude adopted by the Pahang State Government over the Endau-Rompin issue, and called for a retraction of all logging licences before it was too late. Encik Mohamed Fadzean, President of the Society, observed that mankind should value nature and animal life more than money gained from its destruction. However, it was not until the end of the month that the Federal Government took its first positive action to bring the logging of Endau-Rompin to a halt. It imposed a ban on the export of logs from the Endau-Rompin area. The Ministry of Primary Industries refused to consider export applications for logs from the region. This was clearly an action that the Federal Government could take without contravening any State laws.

Many readers of the New Straits Times were startled to find in their paper on October 5, a full page article with the dramatic title 'Endau-Rompin — A case for survival'. The article was written by Datuk Badrillah bin Abdul Karim who presented, alternately, the case for conservation and exploitation. Replete with purple passages, and not entirely without inaccuracies, nevertheless, Datuk Badrillah's statement brought out a number of points and raised several questions. He was certainly right to point out that the Endau-Rompin issue had become a *cause celebre* in Malaysia, but one wondered if his assertion that the core area of the proposed park had *not* been logged, was correct. Perhaps the most disturbing part of Datuk Badrillah's piece was its conclusion that, 'Endau-Rompin, with all its grandeur and glory, with all its sagas of evolutionary mystery . . . must bend before the march of man'. However, his reading public was reassured, albeit rather cryptically, that 'Endau-Rompin will endure as man will endure, as man wills it to endure, on

his path to his Utopia'.

Datuk Badrillah's article touched a responsive chord. In a letter to the New Straits Times of October 4, a correspondent from the University of Malaya, writing under the *nom de plume* 'Anak desa' congratulated Datuk Badrillah and claimed that all who had criticised the logging of Endau-Rompin were from the affluent urban sector of society. *Anak desa* made two other points: that wholesale destruction of the natural environment was proceeding around the towns and cities of Malaysia, without attracting comment. In addition, *Anak desa* was of the opinion that people nowadays enjoyed a better life than had their ancestors who had 'total Mother Nature'. Datuk Badrillah's article did not go unchallenged, however. In the same issue of the New Straits Times, a letter from the Selangor Branch of the Malayan Nature Society offered an alternative to Datuk Badrillah's vision of Malaysia in the future. Instead of the inevitability of polluted streams, burning forests, devastated hills and broiling deserts, there could be 'man as part of nature in harmony with his environment'. The letter also claimed that Datuk Badrillah had misunderstood the concept of a core area in Endau-Rompin, and that, furthermore, the logging would do little to benefit the poor, as Datuk Badrillah had tacitly assumed. Datuk Badrillah had made much of the point that environmental discussions must be pragmatic. The Malayan Nature Society rightly averred that pragmatism did not require logging practices that pollute and destroy. In a third letter to the New Straits Times of October 14, 'S.S.' of Kuantan in Pahang, accused Datuk Badrillah of arguing the case for the Pahang State Government. Later in the month, the Malaysian Forest Society took issue with Datuk Badrillah's statement that loggers could operate extensively if trees with a girth of 52 inches or more were logged, and return for further logging in ten years. This would be 'adopting the short-term interest of a forest entrepreneur,' the Society claimed.

In the interim between Datuk Badrillah's dramatic pronouncement and the response of readers, a letter signed 'Pensyarah-pensyarah', from the Universiti Kebangsaan, appeared in the Business Times of October 8. The letter called on the Federal Government to pay more serious attention to the issue, reminding the Government that Federal money, in large amounts, had gone into development projects in Pahang. Consequently, the Endau-Rompin development could not be considered to be an exclusively State affair. In addition, the concern of the Pahang State Government over compensation of logging licencees raises the issue of compensation of present and future generations of Malaysians who were to be deprived of a substantial amenity, the Endau-Rompin Park.

The Business Times of October 15 reported that the Malaysian Timber Industry Board's monthly bulletin *Maskayu* had carried an editorial on Endau-Rompin. The substance of the editorial was that the Endau-Rompin

debate embraced wider issues than the fate of the Sumatran Rhinoceros; the question at issue was the efficient management of the country's forest resources. This was not an original perception, of course, but the editorial went on to call for the utilization of all parts of the forest trees, not merely the clear bole for logs.

The first intimation that news of the Endau-Rompin controversy had spread overseas, came in the form of a letter from Professor R.E. Holtum, former Director of the Botanic Gardens in Singapore. The letter, reproduced below, was reflective and informed, and written by someone who clearly had no axe to grind.

'Having seen some of your reports on the subject, I would like to add one more voice of protest against the felling of trees in the Endau-Rompin National Park, and against uncontrolled felling of timber in general.

'Next to the human population, the Malayan forest is the country's most important heritage. It is the result of millions of years of evolutionary development, and is in every way immensely more complex than forest in temperate latitudes. It consists of a vast number of different kinds of plants and animals, all living in dependence on each other, and the whole is controlled by the big trees, the shade of which provides the internal climate in which lesser plants can live; and all the animal life is dependent on the plants.

'There is often concern about preserving rare and interesting animals, but too little thought is given to the whole structure of the forest on which these animals depend. That is why it is so disastrous when the biggest trees are felled in the Endau-Rompin National Park. There are also many other factors, ably presented in the statement by the Malayan Nature Society and others.

'From its establishment up to 1940 the Malayan Forest Service demarcated many Forest Reserves in which felling of trees was permitted only according to plan, and only under supervision with a view to minimum destruction of other plants, so that regeneration of the forest could afterwards occur.

'The underlying idea was that the timber was a perennial asset if properly managed. You cannot hurry a tree (it may be possible to breed quicker-growing varieties) and if you want to have a sustained supply of timber you must allow trees time to grow; you must also see that there is not too much destruction of other trees and lesser plants (which protect the soil from erosion) when the bigger trees are removed; the forest will regenerate only if it is disturbed as little as possible.

'Obviously, with increasing population, more forest in Malaya has to be felled entirely, and the land put to other use; but surely the country needs a continued supply of timber, and this can only be assured by careful management of reserved forest, a process which also gives some assurance

that most of the great wealth of lesser plants (many of them still little studied) will be able to continue growth, and also the animals dependent on them.

'The present tendency seems to be to fell big trees as fast as possible, with little regard to the destruction of the rest. This is a short-sighted policy; it produces much money quickly, but the time will come when there are no more accessible big trees to fell, and the country will be left with desolated areas in which erosion will occur and cause more destruction over a much wider area.

'I have seen reports that this is happening on a vast scale in Sabah, Indonesian Borneo and the Philippines. It brings in quick wealth for too few people, and leaves a problem of devastation for the future. It is not a wise man's policy. Looking back at the past, I do not applaud everything the British administration did in Malaya, but I do feel most strongly that the careful planning for conservative management of forests was something of great value which the present administration abandons at its peril.'

The attitude of the Sultan of Pahang to the Endau-Rompin furore was portrayed in a report which appeared in the *New Straits Times* of October 19. The Sultan expressed his willingness to visit the forest and hoped that representatives of wildlife societies and the press would accompany him. 'Perhaps we can even spend a night there. Who knows, we might be able to spot a few rhinos,' he is reported to have said. The Sultan acknowledged that he had received a letter from Mr Gurmit Singh, President of the Environmental Protection Society, Selangor Branch, representing conservation groups in the country, and that he had been too busy to grant Mr Singh an interview.

More definite news about Endau-Rompin emerged during the proceedings of the Dewan Rakyat, the Malaysian House of Representatives, on Monday, 24 October. In reply to questions, the Minister of Science and Technology and Environment announced that the Pahang Government had informed the National Forestry Council that no further logging licences would be issued. However, licences already issued could not be revoked. The Minister, Tan Sri Ong Kee Hui, conceded, in reply to another question, that the activities at Endau-Rompin were contrary to the policies of the Third Malaysia Plan. He also admitted that the Federal Government did not have the authority to stop a State Government from issuing logging licences. Tan Sri Ong went on to say that although the Federal Government could stop the allocation of certain funds, the issue of Endau-Rompin had not reached a stage which would warrant this action. The Minister went on to say that, in the planning stage of the Third Malaysia Plan, a report was submitted by a committee including representatives from Johore and Pahang. The report clearly showed the area designated as a wildlife sanctuary, where logging was not to be permitted. That area was

now being logged. At the same meeting of the Dewan Rakyat, the Primary Industries Minister, Datuk Musa Hitam, provided the information that the Johore Government had issued logging licences covering 6,600 hectares (16,387 acres) on the Johore side of the proposed park area and that, of these, 4,800 hectares (11,785 acres) had already been worked, while the remaining acres were being logged at that time.

A brief report on the Endau-Rompin situation appeared in the October issue of the *FAO Tigerpaper*, and Endau-Rompin once again made banner, front-page headline news in the *New Straits Times* of November 4. The headline read: 'MB: Logging in Park to go on'. The Menteri Besar (MB) of Pahang, Dato Seri Muhammad bin Jusoh, was quoted as saying that, 'it would be wasteful if valuable timber in the area is left to rot.' The Menteri Besar was evasive on a number of points, including the amount of revenue that the State expected to earn in timber taxes, and the date of cessation of logging. Nevertheless, the Menteri Besar hoped that his statement 'would clear up all misunderstanding about the Government's attitude towards the proposed park.' The lead article in the *New Straits Times* continued as follows: 'On the concept of the proposed park, Dato Seri Muhammad said it was actually planned as a "multi-purpose national park" and not merely "a wildlife area" as suggested by certain quarters. A sub-committee set up to study the proposed park said in its 1972 report that controlled mining and logging activities could be carried out in the area. "The 39,000 hectares (96,600 acres) which are Pahang's share of the park contain, besides the trees, some rich mining resources."

' "That is why," the statement added, "the sub-committee made up of representatives from the Pahang and Johore Governments, and the Forest and Game Departments, and chaired by an official from the Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Department agreed that consideration should be given towards exploitation of the area's natural resources."

' "This means that mining and logging operations in certain parts of the area can be carried out," the statement added.

' "This is a progressive stand," it said, "and in line with the multiple land use concept now being practised by developed countries." The Government also could not afford to freeze rich natural resources which could enhance its economic development.

'The statement also pointed out that Pahang contributed almost 30 percent of the total land reserves in the country. "This in itself is significant." It said that logging activities in the area were being controlled and that whatever damage done by tree-felling and road-building could be restored by the growth of secondary forests later, after logging was completed. The statement said controlled logging meant that only trees which are four and a half feet in diameter and above could be felled. Loggers could only extract about 12 tons

per acre, meaning that only four to six trees could be cut down by (sic) per acre. On the question of soil erosion resulting in the pollution of rivers, the statement said the Government makes a careful study of the danger of this happening before it issues licences. To date the area for which the licences were issued were (sic) not hilly and therefore did not carry any threats of soil erosion. The State Government would not issue licences for logging in hilly areas, the statement added.'

Although Mr Lee Lam Thye, Kuala Lumpur Bandar MP, deplored, on behalf of his party, the DAP (Democratic Action Party), the decision of the Pahang Government to permit continued logging at Endau-Rompin, the Menteri Besar for Pahang went on record the following Monday (November 7), to the effect that Pahang could no longer afford the luxury of reserving large tracts of land for one specific use. His opinion was read by a Senior Executive Council member to a four-day seminar on tropical forest management, in Kuantan. Paradoxically, the Menteri Besar stated that although he was aware of the need to conserve the national heritage, the State Government must also consider its responsibility toward achieving the aims of the Third Malaysia Plan. The Menteri Besar claimed that he had been advised that logging and conservation could be practised hand in hand.

The Pahang State Government, in what appeared to be a concession to the protestors of the logging at Endau-Rompin, announced on November 17, that it had held up several new applications for logging licences at Endau-Rompin. At the same time, the Primary Industries Ministry made it known that loggers in the Park would have to obey the rules, otherwise they might lose their M\$15 per acre deposits. Pahang's share of the proposed Park was 39,000 hectares (96,000 acres). Of this, 12,000 hectares (30,000 acres) had been approved for logging, and 12,000 acres had already been worked. It was revealed, by the Menteri Besar, that timber was the main source of income for Pahang and that, in the previous year, the State had collected almost M\$50 million in timber taxes. While these figures might go a long way toward explaining the Pahang State Government's stand on Endau-Rompin, they did not justify the State's action, in the minds of many people. One of these was UMNO Youth President, Haji Suhaimi Kamaruddin, who told the Dewan Rakyat on November 30 that the controversy over logging in the Endau-Rompin area should be a lesson to the authorities concerned and they should not allow it to happen again. "What has happened is disgraceful. Endau-Rompin Park is already destroyed and our future generations will not be able to inherit such beauty," he said. An earlier issue of the *New Straits Times* (November 18) carried an editorial entitled 'New Forests'. The article expressed the viewpoint that the only long-term gain from the Endau-Rompin logging controversy was a considerably heightened awareness of the dangers posed to the environment and the timber industry by the felling of Malaysia's

forests. The editorial went on to state that perhaps awareness was not enough, and that alarm may not be unjustified.

The saga of Endau-Rompin received its most extensive overseas coverage in the December 2 issue of the widely read and respected *Far Eastern Economic Review*, published in Hong Kong. The cover of the issue depicted a logging operation and bore the title, in large capitals, 'Forests: Save or Squander?' Reference to Endau-Rompin in the magazine was part of a review of forests and logging in South-east Asia. The article dealing specifically with Endau-Rompin was written by K. Das, a regular contributor to the *Review*, on Malaysian affairs. In his very first paragraph, Das presented a viewpoint which had not been brought out in the Malaysian press: '... while the 'Save Endau-Rompin' campaign was undoubtedly conducted by well-meaning people, it had the hallmark of being orchestrated by some who had been left out in the rush for the lucrative logging licences'. The article contained other points which had not been aired publicly in Malaysia, and it also served to place the Endau-Rompin conflict in a rather different perspective.

Pahang, Das stated, already has eight parks amounting to 413,00 hectares (1.02 million acres), excluding Pulau Tioman and adjacent islands. Only half of Pahang's 360,000 hectares (8.9 million acres) is suitable for agriculture or forestry. Thus, a quarter of Pahang's usable land was effectively removed. Das credited the 'ecology lobby' with realizing that the fate of the rhinos in the area was a 'non-starter as an issue'. More significantly Das claimed that 'it became known that the logging was taking place *not in the wildlife reserve* but just north of it'. Das revealed that the main logger in Endau-Rompin was a former Protector of Aborigines in Pahang. He also attributed those involved in the timber trade with the admission that, after the Endau-Rompin row, licensing would become much more difficult. Another perspective on Endau-Rompin, and the fate of the forests in general, was the amount of forest being cleared by the Government, for security reasons. On the 170-mile east-west highway from Penang to Kota Bharu, for example, a mile-wide swath was being completely cleared on each side of the road. If completed, 350 square miles of forest would be destroyed. Yet another consideration was that, in the view of foresters, damage to the river system by Endau-Rompin logging was less likely than that due to sludge from oil-palm mills. Regulations were introduced in 1977 to control the discharge of effluents from oil-palm processing mills. Forty-two rivers were reported to be grossly polluted by the discharge from oil-palm mills at that time.

The *Review* staff in Malaysia had clearly obtained insights into the Endau-Rompin affair from discussions with a wide spectrum of foresters, officials and others. The *Review* article had touched on undercurrents which had not been covered in the *Dewan Rakyat* or in the newspapers. The *Review's* series on forests elicited an interesting letter, in the next issue, from Jeffrey N. Shane

in Bangkok. Mr. Shane commented on the reluctance of the Federal Government to interfere in the Endau-Rompin controversy because the Malaysian Constitution allocates legislative responsibility for land and forests to the States. On the strength of an examination of Malaysia's Constitution during a technical assistance project, Shane claimed that the Federal Government was empowered to intervene. Furthermore, State Forestry Officers must accept professional advice given by the Federal Government. In short, there was, within the Malaysian Constitution, provision for dealing with just such a contingency as that presented by Endau-Rompin.

At the end of 1977, the year in which the Endau-Rompin controversy arose, the issue was still being discussed but its currency was past its peak, and emotions had subsided. Apart from a letter to the *New Straits Times* deploring the destruction and specifically mentioning Endau-Rompin, little was heard about Endau-Rompin in 1978, until March 21, 1978, when the *New Straits Times* carried an article entitled 'Logging in Endau-Rompin to stop'. It reported that the Pahang State Government had given its firm assurance that the logging would be discontinued in August when the last licence issued to loggers expired. Although the licences covered an area of 12,140 hectares (30,000 acres), it was claimed by State Officials that the logging had been restricted to 5,100 hectares (12,650 acres). The loggers had been compensated for this restriction by the allocation of logging areas elsewhere in the State. Ironically, the article on Endau-Rompin appeared below a photograph of the Sultan of Pahang. The photograph was displayed as part of a report of the ceremonial opening of the Malaysian Parliament. The Sultan of Pahang was serving in his capacity as Timbalan Yang Di Pertuan Agong in the absence of the King himself. Appropriately, March 21st was World Forest Day, and the same issue of the *New Straits Times* contained a full-page advertisement entitled 'The Living Heritage', commemorating the day. The advertisement had been inserted by a number of organizations including the Malaysian Timber Industry Board and the Forestry Department.

It was clear, from subsequent references to Endau-Rompin, that the logging of the proposed Park at Endau-Rompin had become a paradigm for conservation and forestry issues in Malaysia. In a special supplement on logging and sawmilling in the *New Sunday Times* of 26 March, 1978, reference was made to Endau-Rompin 'where extensive damage has been done, perhaps irreparably, to the forest through indiscriminate logging'. Writing from Penang, John Kam expressed concern over the delay in the declaration of Penang's Pantai Aceh as a National Park (see Chapter 7). 'Will Pantai Aceh suffer the same fate as Endau-Rompin?' he asked. In April 1978 the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) urged the State Government to gazette the Pantai Aceh Forest Reserve as a State National Park. 'We can ill afford to have another Endau-Rompin,' CAP stated. Writing in the

Malayan Naturalist, a quarterly newsletter of the Malayan Nature Society, Mr Rodney Flynn of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks expressed concern for the future of the Sumatran Rhinoceros in Endau-Rompin. Logging had fragmented the population into very small groups and no new young rhino tracks were seen in 1977. In areas that had been logged and which had contained rhinos before the logging, no tracks were observed after the logging had occurred.

There seemed to be little doubt left that the logging of Endau-Rompin was *a fait accompli*. At a meeting held in Kuala Lumpur in late March, 1978, the Environmental Protection Society, the Selangor Graduates Society and the Malayan Nature Society called on the Pahang State Government to remedy the environmental damage inflicted on Endau-Rompin, to accept the National Parks Act and to gazette the establishment of Endau-Rompin Park immediately. The silver lining to Endau-Rompin according to the *New Straits Times* (August 9, 1978) was a pledge by the States, of 12 million acres as a permanent reserve and agreement to formulate a national forestry code. This was followed, a few days later, by the Pahang Government's disclosure that it had obtained M\$3 million in revenues from the 5,100 hectares (12,650 acres) within its section of the Park where logging licences had been issued — a silver lining of a different order. In an editorial on pollution in the October 31, 1978 edition of the *New Straits Times* the novel point was made that 'Even within the sphere of pollution there are areas of snob appeal: Thus while it is fashionable to rave about Endau-Rompin . . . we very often forget . . .'

In June 1979 Encik Mohd. Khan bin Momin Khan, Director-General of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, announced that Johore had released its share of 488,000 hectares (120,525 acres) of the Park and that he was trying to obtain Pahang's approval for the release of 38,900 hectares (96,000 acres) as its contribution to the Park. The Pahang Government's response to this announcement was that it had not received an application from the Department for Pahang's share. However, it was stated that logging activities in Pahang's area of the proposed Park had ceased and that the forest was being policed to prevent further illegal logging.

In a wide-ranging plea for the protection of Malaysian wildlife, a correspondent to the *New Straits Times* on August 2, 1979, mentioned Endau-Rompin. The name of Endau-Rompin was again invoked in November, 1979, by Paulynn Chin, reporting on the campaign by the Environmental Protection Society to preserve Court Hill, in Kuala Lumpur, as a park rather than as the site of Malayan Banking's new 48-storey headquarters. Paulynn Chin, writing in the *New Straits Times*, cited several examples of bad planning in the capital city, where open space or greenery had been needlessly replaced with concrete: in 1977 work began on a massive highway *through* the beautiful Lake Gardens, while Bungsar Hill was a classic example of bad

development. The hill was completely denuded with nothing to prevent erosion except silt traps — the main culprits responsible for recurring Bungsar floods. Many other sites in Kuala Lumpur can be adduced to illustrate the 'mad pursuit of the cementisation of space' as the Environmental Protection Society put it. If such things can happen in the capital, what chance is there for remote areas of forest? During a debate on the National Parks Bill in the Dewan Negara at the beginning of 1980, Senator Michael Wong Kuan Lee urged the Government to empower a Minister to reserve any tract of land in any State for the setting up of National Parks. He said that the problems surrounding the setting up of the Endau-Rompin National Park should serve as an 'eye-opener' to the Government. As a result of human greed, much of our flora and fauna have been destroyed, he added.

The Endau-Rompin affair had mobilized public opinion around a conservation issue, in a way, and on a scale, which had never occurred before in Malaysia. Many people had been alerted to the disadvantages of the indiscriminate destruction of their forest heritage. It is likely that more than one member of the Federal Government also had been obliged to think of the forests as something more than a source of quick profit or as primitive terrain. But the Government had acted slowly — too slowly to save much of the forest ecosystem. Only those in, or close to, the corridors of power will know precisely why. Many who understand Malaysian politics will know that they are inextricably bound up with land and forests. Land, for the settlement of the impoverished Malay peasantry spells votes, and the distribution of land is the prerogative of the States. The forests, through timber concessions, provide funds and a ready means of compensating political supporters. It was the rape of Sabah's forests that helped bring down the State Government of the flamboyant Tun Mustapha. The political crisis in Kelantan in 1977 arose out of allegations by the Chief Minister that members of his party had corruptly granted timber concessions. Of one thing there can be no doubt: whether the land is cleared for settlement or the forests felled for timber, the losers are the wildlife of Malaysia.