

# Malaysia considers reward in dead-elephants case

February 6 2013

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This handout photo taken and released by the Sabah Wildlife Department on January 29, 2013 shows a baby elephant staying close to a dead pygmy elephant in the Gunung Rara Forest Reserve. Malaysian authorities will offer a \$16,000 reward for information after 14 of the rare elephants were found dead last month, if it is confirmed they were poisoned.

Malaysian authorities will offer a \$16,000 reward for information on 14 rare Borneo pygmy elephants found dead last month, if it is confirmed they were poisoned.

Masidi Manjun, tourism, culture and environment minister for the state of Sabah on vast [Borneo island](#), told AFP that authorities hoped the reward would help them get new leads.

"There is a reward of 50,000 ringgit for information leading to the arrest, prosecution and conviction of the alleged culprits if the chemist report confirms that death was due to intentional poisoning," he said.

He added in a text message that the report is due to be completed on Friday, about a fortnight after a group of eight [elephants](#) were found dead near an oil palm plantation.

Further bodies were later found decomposing in the Gunung Rara [forest reserve](#), and officials are trying to save a three-month-old calf, poignantly photographed nuzzling its dead mother and now staying in a wildlife park.

Officials believe the pachyderms—an endangered species—may have been poisoned, possibly by substances left out by workers at nearby plantations to deter them from eating the palm fruit.

Poisoning is suspected due to severe ulceration and bleeding in the animals' digestive tracts.

Masidi has vowed to push for severe punishment including a stiff jail sentence for anyone found to have maliciously poisoned the animals.

WWF-Malaysia in a statement blamed the deaths on rampant felling of forests by planters, which had forced elephants to find alternative food and space and put them in conflict with humans.

The group says only about 1,200 Borneo pygmy elephants, which are smaller and have more rounded features than full-sized [Asian elephants](#),

are estimated to be left in the wild.

The state of Sabah once teemed with wildlife including elephants, orangutan, clouded leopards and a vast array of monkeys and birds.

Pockets of thriving wildlife populations still survive but have been squeezed into ever smaller areas by the expansion of logging and agriculture, particularly the cultivation of oil palms, which produce a profitable edible oil.

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