

Crush and burn: Malaysia destroys huge ivory trove

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A Malaysian wildlife worker stands in front of a cargo container of seized ivory before it is publicly crushed during an event at the Kualiti Alam Waste Management centre in Port Dickson on April 14, 2016

Malaysia has destroyed 9.5 tonnes of elephant ivory it seized over the years, which authorities hope will help deter smugglers who have long used the country as a trans-shipment point.

The huge pile of African elephant tusks, estimated to be worth \$20 million, was first fed into in an industrial crusher to be pulverised, and then incinerated in a giant furnace in Port Dickson in southern Malaysia.

Malaysia has previously announced in Parliament that 4,624 ivory tusks were confiscated between 2011 and 2014.

"This is our first-ever ivory destruction. We want to send a strong message to the world that Malaysia does not compromise in protecting endangered species," Natural Resources and Environment Minister Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar told AFP.

The international ivory trade, with rare exceptions, has been outlawed since 1989 after the population of African elephants declined from millions in the mid-20th century to just 600,000 by the end of the 1980s.

But poachers and smugglers have continued to exploit demand, mainly from Asia and particularly China, where ivory is highly prized for medicinal and decorative uses.

Malaysia, a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), has seized a number of shipments over the years, mostly by sea.



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In March, officials said they had confiscated 159 kilogrammes (350 pounds) of ivory smuggled by passengers aboard commercial flights.

Wan Junaidi said the tusks destroyed Thursday originated from 11 African countries ranging from Ghana to Tanzania.

They were publicly destroyed to deter smugglers, he said, while adding it also was partly in response to questions raised by conservationists over the fate of seized ivory.

"I do not want any of the seized ivory lost. If the ivory is no longer

needed to be kept for evidence, we will destroy it," he said.

The event was witnessed by foreign diplomats and conservation groups.

"We look forward to these good intentions being bolstered with concrete actions to tackle the factors that have made Malaysia a key transit point in the global [ivory](#) trade," said Kanitha Krishnasamy, programme manager for TRAFFIC in Southeast Asia.

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