

# PNR CONSOLIDATING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

October 16, 2016, Sunday Cecilia Sman, [reporters@theborneopost.com](mailto:reporters@theborneopost.com)  
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MIRI: Scheduled for completion end of next year, community-oriented Piasau Nature Reserve (PNR) is poised to consolidate the image of Miri City in global tourism and environmental conservation.

According to Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC), currently works are being carried out on two main components of the project – site restoration and Visitor Centre Complex.

The launch of the ‘Bring Back the Rainforest’ (BBtRF) Project on Sept 11 this year by the Head of State, Tun Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, marked a new era in site restoration of PNR – landscape restoration and conservation.

“BBtRF Project is to rehabilitate degraded forest areas in PNR, formerly called Piasau Camp, a residential area for Shell staff since 1950s.

“The target is to bring back the forest and hopefully within 20 to 30 years this forest will become a rainforest,” said SFC, the government agency managing the nature reserve.

Under the project, various species of native plants, herbs and trees like meranti, kapor, belian and fig (*Ficus tinctoria*) which is the favourite fruit of hornbills are being planted at PNR.

It will have five gardens – Piasau Garden, Mixed Species Garden, Fruit Tree Garden, Ficus Garden and Herbal Garden – serving roles similar to the botanic garden in plant conservation and education.

The project is implemented based on ‘the Gensler’s Masterplan’ to achieve the five targets, taking cognisance of the importance of PNR to the ecology and also conservation of flora and fauna.

They are Conservation (restoring areas of biodiversity protection); Optimisation (manage access to recreational users with existing infrastructure); Diversification (offer immersive educational experiences to increase awareness); Research (strengthen the unique conservation mission through research and study); and Community (enhancing community pride and sense of ownership).

The ultimate goals are to ensure sufficient food supply and an environment conducive for wildlife species residing in PNR, making it a major birding spot in Sarawak, increase visitors’ arrival to PNR which offers opportunities for visitors to experience rainforest landscape in an urban setting.

## **Unique BBtRF concept**

The concept is a continuation of community involvement in the setting up of PNR. Thus to help realise the target of planting 10,000 plants, herbs and trees within three years and its success, the support of people are required ranging from sponsoring the saplings and also planting them.

The adoption fee is RM50,000 per plot for the corporate sector and RM3,000 per tree for an individual.

During the launch of the BBtRF project, Taib was joined by 800 volunteers from various bodies, including schools, in planting a total of 1,000 tree saplings.

Among the dignitaries who turned ‘planters’ were Second Minister of Resource Planning and Environment Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan, State Legislative Assembly Speaker Datuk Amar Mohd Awang Asfia Awang Nassar, Local Government Minister Datuk Dr Sim Kui Hian, Assistant Minister of Tourism Datuk Lee Kim Shin; Deputy State Secretary Datuk Ismawi Ismuni and permanent secretary to the Ministry of Resource Planning and Environment Datu Sudarsono Osman.

At the gathering, corporate adopters Ta Ann Holdings Berhad, Shell Malaysia, Shin Yang Group of Companies, Dayang Enterprise Holdings Sdn Bhd and Samling Strategic Corporation Sdn Bhd each handed over RM50,000 towards the project.

Prior to the launch, several corporations and agencies like Dayang Enterprise and non-governmental organisations like the Malaysian Nature Society, MNS Miri Chapter and the Piasau Camp Miri Nature Society (PCMNPS) both strong advocates of PNR, conducted the tree planting and set up the community trail at PNR.

### **Visitor Centre and Administrative Complex**

The complex will be at the former Tenby International School and work on the project is scheduled to start end of this year.

It’s conversion into Visitor Centre and Administrative Complex is to optimise Communication, Education and Public Awareness (Cepa) efforts at PNR.

Among its facilities are the Visitor Centre, Exhibition Gallery/Centre, gift shop, cafeteria and Conference Centre.

### **Why PNR is a unique community oriented project**

It is a public driven project and a classic example of excellent cooperation between the community and relevant authorities. Why?

PNR was formerly called Piasau Camp, a residential area for Sarawak Shell Berhad (SSB) where over 200 houses were built in the 50s, thus making it a historical site synonymous with the oil and gas industry in Miri first started in 1910.

The people, fearing Shell’s decision to relinquish the camp to the government in September 2013, began campaigning to prevent it from being developed into a beach-side attraction with shophouses and condominiums that would further endanger the wildlife there, including the iconic hornbills.

The local community, NGOs like MNS Miri Chapter, PCMNPS and political parties aggressively lobbied the state government for the area to be declared a totally protected area.

Their persistent calls were answered when it was gazetted on December 31, 2013 as Nature Reserve for conservation of hornbills and other wildlife, a heritage site and buffer zone against natural disasters.

SFC said the approval within three months was a record for Sarawak as some national parks and nature reserve projects took years and even decades to be gazetted.

### **PNR importance in conservation and ecology**

Studies on PNR and its biodiversity components carried out by SFC, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) and MNS showed that despite being located within the urban area of Miri City with a population of over 300,000, PNR recorded a notable number of plant and animal species.

It has 107 plant species and 75 fauna species including 17 species of fauna protected under Wildlife Protection Ordinance, 45 bird species (including the hornbills), three mammal species, five amphibian species, 12 reptile species and 10 butterfly species.

The existence of many protected wildlife species like the Oriental Pied Hornbill is said to be one of the agents of change for the setting up of PNR.

PNR is famous as the breeding ground for Jimmy (dominant male) and his soulmate, the late Faridah. The couple since 2005 had successfully produced 56 offspring before Faridah died on September 26, 2013 after it was shot by a poacher. Hornbills are known to pair for life, and when Faridah died there were concerns about the wellbeing of Jimmy.

The worries however were set aside when Jimmy found love in Juliet (offspring of Jimmy and Faridah) and in two nestling cycles they produced three offspring- Musa and Cecilia (November 2014 – February 2015) and Ching in the second nestling cycle in January 27, 2016. Juliet as of yesterday (Oct 14) had started her third nestling cycle.

To date, 21 individual hornbills were recorded in PNR. The male hornbills were named Jimmy, Anthony, Han, Ibrahim, Munyung, Robert, Kareem, Sam, Abong, Moses, Ah Kaw, Musa and Ching, while the female were named Faridah (deceased), Cathy, Alice, Julia, Ah Moi, Rosita, Juliet and Cecilia.

The gazetting of the 88.65ha PNR is a role model for community driven projects in the urban areas. Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Adenan Satem when speaking at the launch of the project on May 10, 2014 called PNR a fine model for the setting up of other urban nature reserves planned for town centres like Sibü.