



The first Borneo Pygmy Elephant skeleton at Universiti Malaysia Sabah. The elephant died three months after it was rescued and translocated to Lok Kawi Wildlife Park in 2011.

## First Borneo pygmy elephant skeleton at UMS

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**KOTA KINABALU:** The first Borneo Pygmy Elephant skeleton in Sabah was launched yesterday, at the Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ITBC) in Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

UMS Vice Chancellor, Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah said the university is hoping the skeleton will attract the interest of students and the public to visit the ITBC gallery, Borneensis Gallery.

"At present, the Borneo elephant is found only on the island of Borneo, that is, in eastern and central Sabah, as well as the extreme north of Indonesian Kalimantan.

"The range of wild elephant in Sabah and Kalimantan seems to have expanded very little in the past 100 years despite access to suitable habitat elsewhere in Borneo.

It was speculated that the distribution of wild elephants in Borneo may be limited by the occurrence of natural mineral sources.

"The population size of the Bornean elephant is estimated to be 2,040 individuals in the five main elephant ranges in Sabah, namely Tabin, Lower Kinabatangan, North Kinabatangan, Central Sabah and Ulu Kalumpang," he said at the launching ceremony yesterday.

His speech was read by his deputy, Professor Dr D. Kamarudin D. Mudin.

Harun added that the presence of the elephant skeleton enhanced the importance of the Borneensis Gallery.

The skeleton on display is that of an elephant called Tagas, named after the Tagas Rocer where it was rescued from the plantation forest

at Tagas-Tagas, Beluran on January 10, 2011.

Tagas was then translocated to Lok Kawi Wildlife Park but died three months after.

The excavation was carried out in late 2015, and upon request to JICA-SDBEC, the project chief then, Kazunobu Suzuki made arrangement for Dr Hiroshi Sawamura from Ashoro Museum of Palontology, Hokkaido to offer his services in turning the idea into a reality.

"The realization of this project is expected to enhance the awareness and education on the importance of biodiversity conservation with particular reference to the largest land mammal on Borneo Island.

"I have no doubt that the addition of this exhibit will enhance the uniqueness of this collection centre," said Harun.