Screening 1.7 million

The government wants no repeat of the Top Glove incident where Covid-19 positive cases have hit four figures and forced the manufacturer to close 28 of its factories for now. Besides imposing mandatory testing for nearly 1.7 million foreign workers, operators who crowd their dorms will be fined RM50,000 – per worker, a move which takes effect today.

> See reports by SIRA HABIBU, ALLISON LAI and WANI MUTHIAH on page 8

Wild pangolins test negative for Covid-19

Study finds the endangered species in Malaysia pose no threat to human health and do not carry the dreaded virus. > See report by RAZAK AHMAD on page 12
Wild pangolins pose no harm

Study shows the critically endangered mammal is not a threat to humans

By RAZAK AHMAD

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia’s critically endangered wild pangolins have tested negative for Covid-19, indicating that they pose no threat to human health amid reports that they are possible carriers of the virus.

This is the key finding of a recently published study which further undermines the perception of protecting one of the most trafficked mammals in the world.

The study, PREDICT, which was set up to look for novel zoonotic viruses in wildlife before they become human epidemics, has tested thousands of animals in 33 countries, rescued and seized illegally trafficked pangolins in Malaysia.

The pangolin samples were collected from animals before or just after they entered the illegal wildlife trade.

All tested negative for viruses that could potentially threaten humans including SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19.

The findings suggest that wild pangolins pose no threat to human health.

Lee also highlights the importance of carefully ending the trade of wildlife and improving biosecurity at wet markets to avoid having wild animals co-mingling with farmed animals and humans, said Tom Hughes, EcoHealth Alliance project coordinator in Malaysia and co-author of Conservation Medicine.

EcoHealth Alliance is a global conservation and pandemic-prevention non-governmental organization, which managed the PREDICT project in Malaysia.

PREDICT was funded by United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Emerging Pandemic Threats programme.

As Covid-19 spread throughout the world early this year, reports began to emerge linking the disease to pangolins with some suggesting that they are a potential host for the virus.

Scientists have also detected SARS-CoV-2 related viruses in pangolins are most likely a result of their exposure to infected people, wildlife, or other animals after they entered the illegal wildlife trade, said Jimmy Lee, EcoHealth Alliance’s field manager in Malaysia.

Lee and Hughes are among the authors of the research paper titled, “No Evidence Of Coronavirus Or Other Potentially Zoonotic Viruses In Sundas Pangolings (Manis Javanica) Entering The Wildlife Trade Via Malaysia,” which was published on Nov 24 in the journal Conservation Medicine.

“The ordinance was enacted for the purpose of curbing issues linked with exploitation and extinction of native and endemic species in Sarawak,” said Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Haji Mohd Zaidi bin Hashim. The ordinance was enacted for the purpose of curbing issues linked with exploitation and extinction of native and endemic species in Sarawak,” said Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Haji Mohd Zaidi bin Hashim.

The ordinance further stipulates that wildlife and wildlife products hunted anywhere in the state.

By AUSTIN CAMOENS

DENGKIL: A Malaysian man is believed to be the mastermind behind an illicit cigarette smuggling ring bringing in 11.3 million ciga-

By BY SHARON LING and STEPHEN THEN

KUCHING: A state environmental group which is monitoring the illegal logging of Dayaks in Kapit to be given leave to sell wild boar meat to supple-

By BERNAMA

Sarawak Eco-Warriors said it was an offence under the state’s Wildlife Protection Ordinance to sell or buy wildlife or wildlife products hunted

Malaysian ‘don’ behind cigarette smuggling ring

By AUSTRALIA

Sarawak group against wild boar meat trade