



ORANGUTAN DIPLOMACY : ENVIRONMENT

NEWS : *Why has Malaysia tweaked its 'Orangutan diplomacy'?*

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS ?

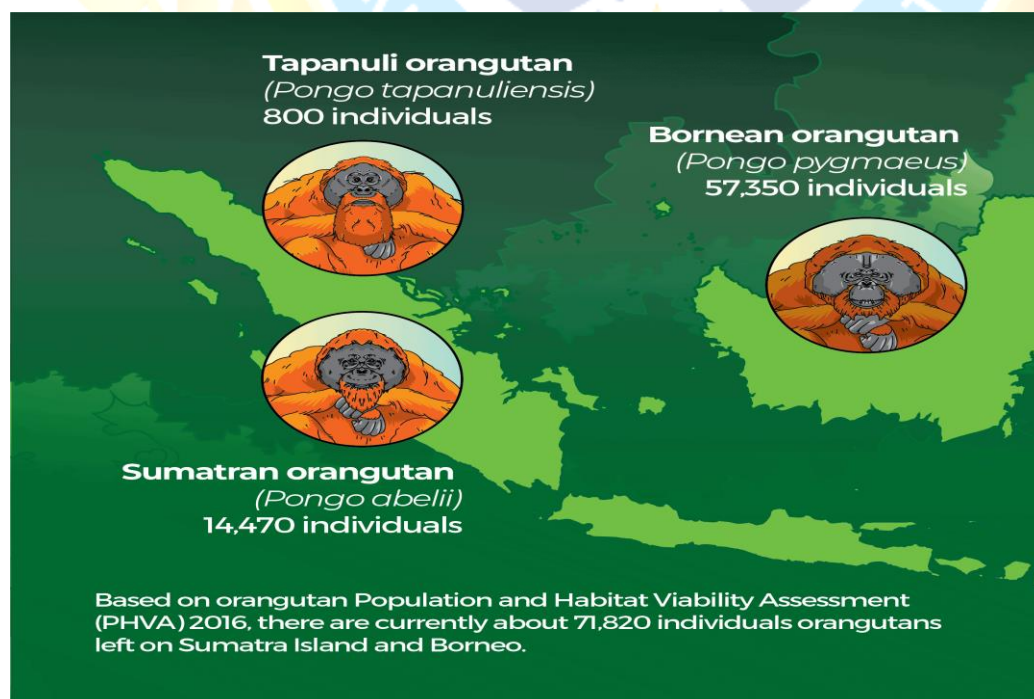
Malaysia, the world's second-largest palm oil producer, has been under immense pressure to make its palm oil industry more sustainable. The industry has been linked to deforestation, causing the loss of habitat for orangutans.

Initial Proposal and Rationale

- **Orangutan Diplomacy:** In May 2023, Malaysia's Plantation and Commodities Minister, Johari Ghani, proposed gifting critically endangered orangutans to palm oil-importing countries, inspired by China's "panda diplomacy." The idea aimed to soften the global criticism of Malaysia's palm oil industry, which is linked to deforestation and habitat loss.
- **Sustainability Showcase:** The proposal was intended to demonstrate Malaysia's commitment to sustainable palm oil production and environmental conservation.

Criticism and Reevaluation

- **Conservationist Backlash:** The proposal faced strong opposition from wildlife conservationists, who argued that gifting orangutans would be hypocritical and that efforts should focus on preserving their natural habitats, which are endangered by palm oil cultivation.
- **Panda Diplomacy Comparison:** Critics noted that unlike China, Malaysia lacks the protected areas and advanced facilities needed to support such a program.





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Revised Conservation Strategy

- **Sponsorship Initiative:** In response to the criticism, the proposal was revised to offer palm oil importers the chance to "sponsor" orangutans, with the proceeds directed towards their conservation in Malaysia.
- **Enhanced Conservation Efforts:** Funds from the sponsorships will be used to support orangutan conservation programs within Malaysia, including habitat protection and expert-led monitoring to ensure their safety and well-being.

Source : <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-global/malaysia-orangutan-diplomacy-9526229/>

