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Bacteria caused snake deaths at farm

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SEREMBAN: The snakes at the Kuala Pilah Snake Farm here died from infection by bacteria spread through the watering channels.

In confirming an earlier report in the *New Straits Times* about the deaths of the snakes, state secretary Datuk Norzam Mohd Nor said a total of 30 snakes of various species had died in stages over a period of two months.

He said immediate measures had been taken to ensure the remaining 28 snakes were not infected.

"We have so far placed five anacondas in quarantine while upgrading and renovation works are being carried out at the farm.

"Steps have also been taken to provide a better habitat for the snakes, including carrying out research to determine suitable conditions for them.

"Routine health checks are being done to ensure the snakes are healthy and we have also engaged experts to look into their diet," he said.

The NST had reported on Tuesday that a number of snakes at the farm had died in the last few months.

The farm houses about 30 species of snakes brought in from various parts of the world. They include the red-tailed boa imported from Brazil and a Burmese python from Myanmar.

Others included the blood python, Borneo short-tailed python, Amazon tree boa, Columbia boa, Brazilian rainbow boa, Albino Burmese python, Indian python and the Bolivian anaconda.

The snake farm was the talk of the town when a green anaconda from Brazil gave birth to 13 offsprings in May.

The green anaconda died about a month after giving birth, while three of its offsprings are still alive and being kept under quarantine.

"A committee comprising officers of the State Forestry Department, Kuala Pilah District Council, State Economic Planning Unit, Tourism Promotion Board and Tourism Action Council has been set up to oversee the farm.

"The committee will work closely with snake experts from Universiti Pertanian Malaysia to ensure the snakes are well cared for."

He said the dead snakes were sent to UPM and a post-mortem report had been submitted to the state government.

According to the report, the snakes' deaths were caused by the bacteria. Their diet was also unsuitable.

Norzam said the farm would be temporarily closed for about two months to enable upgrading and re-modelling of the snakes' habitat.

"We want the farm to be a big tourism attraction for both local and foreign tourists and we will do all we can to ensure the snakes are well cared for.

"I don't deny that we did incur losses but we have identified the problems and will iron it out.

"We have learnt from our mistakes and the snakes will now be under expert supervision and care," he said.

Meanwhile, state DAP chairman Anthony Loke Siew Fook, who visited the farm yesterday, said he wanted the state government to be transparent in the matter.

He called on the government to reveal the amount spent on procuring the snakes and the credentials of the consultants engaged to oversee

the project.

"A lot of money had been spent on the project and we want to ensure it meets its aim of being a top tourist attraction and not just a waste of public funds," he said.



The Burmese python from Myanmar at the farm. Immediate measures have been taken to ensure the remaining snakes are not infected.