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Media Statement

3 May 2018

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION IN THE STATE OF PERAK IS DISAPPOINTING

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) is disappointed with the authorities for falling short on environmental conservation efforts in Perak. Over the last few years, SAM had oft-times come across environmental issues and conflicts in the state of Perak.

The environmental issues and conflicts are contrary to the commitment expressed by the authorities to conserve the environment and develop the state sustainably. Among the issues and environmental conflicts that arise include the following three clusters, namely forestry and natural protected areas; solid waste; and urban and regional planning.

Forestry and Natural Protected Areas

- Excised part of Tanjung Hantu Forest Reserve (HS Tanjung Hantu) which was classified as Virgin Jungle Forest (VJR), turtle landing area and was also categorized as Environmentally Sensitive Area Rank 1, covering 56.06 hectares on 13 October 2011 for industrial purposes (LNG plant).
- Excised the entire Bikam Forest Reserve (HS Bikam) which is a habitat for a Critically Endangered (CR) species, *Dipterocarpus coriaceus* plant, listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). On May 29 2013, an area covering 495.5ha was excised for agricultural purposes (cultivation of oil palm).
- In relation to the threatened critical species (CR) under the IUCN i.e. Keruing paya (*Dipterocarpus coriaceus*), we are concerned that another habitat of the species has been destroyed when part of the Chikus Forest Reserve (HS Chikus) covering an area of 663ha was excised on February 2, 2017 for agricultural purposes.
- Excised the entire Chior Wildlife Reserve (RHL Chior) which is the first Wildlife Reserve / protection area for big game established in Malaysia. RHL Chior is also a major habitat for large mammals especially elephants. The excision covering an area of 692.7ha on July 31, 2014 was for agricultural purposes (development of oil palm plantation).
- Changed the land-use of forest in the Permanent Reserved Forest (HSK) area for quarrying of granite. One of the cases is in Compartments 13, 14, 15 and 16 of Segari Melintang Forest Reserve (HS Segari Melintang) covering 80ha in 2017. The approval for quarrying in the HSK area is contradictory and does not comply with the resolution of the 70th Meeting of the National Land Council (Majlis Tanah Negara - MTN). The MTN had recommended that all State Governments take initiatives to control or if possible to avoid any approval of mining and quarrying activities in HSK. This is because mining and quarrying activities in HSK will directly affect the attainment of sustainable forest management that is central to the management of the nation's forests.

- The turtle landing area in Segari is still not gazetted as a protected area (PA) but has been approved as an industrial area (iron and steel mills) and sand extraction area.
- The landing area for river terrapin (tuntung) in Bota is still not gazetted as PA and raises concern due to its proximity to several areas of river sand extraction.
- No areas covered by limestone forest are gazetted as HSK or protected areas. There is a habitat for a threatened critical species (CR) under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species i.e. *Hopea bilitonensis* tree at Gunung Gajah and Gunung Tempurung, Gopeng. While in the limestone hill caves there is a habitat of a rare spider, *Liphistius kanthan*, which is known as living fossil. The spider has a segmented abdomen and does not resemble modern spiders.
- The HSK's total land area in Perak in 2015 of 997,623.86ha decreased to 997,604.12ha in 2016. This is contrary to one of the main Corporate Strategies of the State Forestry Department i.e: Maintaining the area of existing Permanent Reserved Forest and increasing its breadth.

Solid Waste

- The ban on polystyrene food containers and plastic bags has yet to be implemented and enforced in the state of Perak. The ban was supposed to be implemented in June 2017.
- Continued the operation of solid waste disposal site at Teluk Mengkudu, Segari although the Department of Environment did not approve the Environmental Impact Assessment (DEIA) Report. The landfill is located within an Environmentally Sensitive Area.
- Management and collection of solid waste is still unsatisfactory especially in the rural areas where waste can be found dumped indiscriminately.

Urban and regional planning

- Changed zoning and land-use from tourism and natural areas (forest) e.g. part of Teluk Muroh Forest Reserve (HS Teluk Muroh) to industrial zone on 19 November 2009.
- Excised HSK area in Piah Forest Reserve (HS Piah) and Korbu Forest Reserve (HS Korbu) before holding public hearing session of the Kuala Kangsar Local Plan.
- Current land-use/zone map and land-use information in physical planning documents, namely the Ipoh Local Plan and Perak State Structure Plan do not state and indicate that there is a radioactive waste site in Lahat.

SAM hopes that actions will be taken on the issues and conflicts listed above as per the commitment made by the Perak State Authority for the well-being of the environment in the state.

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