



**Sahabat Alam Malaysia**  
**Friends of the Earth Malaysia**  
For Environmental Justice

1, Jalan Joki, 11400 Penang, Malaysia  
Tel No: +604 827 6930  
Fax No: +604 827 6932  
Email: foemalaysia@gmail.com  
<https://www.foe-malaysia.org>

**PRESS RELEASE**

**8 September 2020**

**SAM WELCOMES SETTING UP OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES UNIT**

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) welcomes the announcement by the Minister of Environment and Water (MEW) Dato' Seri Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man, on the setting up of an environmental crimes unit to tackle illegal activities that could harm the country's natural resources.

We welcome the announcement by the Environment Minister that plans were in place to coordinate efforts between the ministry, police and the armed forces to protect precious resources from contamination.

This move is long overdue indeed, given recent events from illegal activities such as dumping of toxic and industrial wastes into our rivers such as the Klang Valley water pollution and the Sungai Kim Kim pollution that adversely affected large numbers of the public, including schoolchildren.

Other illegal activities such as logging, as well as the poaching and trade in wildlife, deserve the same consideration as well.

These matters are within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (MENR) and it will be good if the environmental crimes unit is also extended to tackle illegal activities that destroy our forests and biodiversity resources as well, in addition to our water resources.

Since water catchments are in forests, it makes total sense in taking care of these natural resources as well.

At the international level, wildlife trade has been linked to the emergence of the corona virus responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic, and to prevent other such zoonotic diseases, it is also vital that we give very high consideration to the protection of our wildlife and biodiversity resources.

So we also propose that the MENR and the MEW collaborate with the Ministry of National Security and Defence as well as Home Affairs for the coordination of matters on crimes related to environment and natural resources.

In addition, strong action must also be taken against those officials in enforcement agencies who have been derelict in their duties under the various laws to undertake effective monitoring and enforcement actions. It is pointless in having strong laws but weak implementation.

Further, the judiciary must give environmental offences and crimes very serious attention and impose maximum and deterrent sentences, instead of imposing simple fines that allows the offenders to continue to pay and pollute.

We agree with the Environment Minister that threats to natural resources can have detrimental effects on the lives of citizens as well as the economy, and therefore we must learn and act before other environmental disasters happen.

Hence, the environmental crimes unit is a step in the right direction.

**Meenakshi Raman**  
**President**  
**Sahabat Alam Malaysia**