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For Environmental Justice

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Press Statement

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Call to halt proposed open cast mining of manganese ore in Gua Musang, Kelantan

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) is firmly opposed to the proposed open cast mining for manganese ore at Aring 6, Mukim Relai, Gua Musang, which will damage 500 acres of land and cause serious water pollution, destroy wildlife habitat and natural environment which must be protected and conserved.

We are most concerned that such an opencast/strip mining has been proposed for this project by Nadi KW Sdn Bhd, as disclosed in an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that is currently under review.

Despite well-known dangers of open cast and strip mining abroad which have shown the significant damage which can result to the environment, we are shocked that such a proposal is under consideration.

To make matters worse, the EIA reveals that **the project has already cleared 117.32 ha (57%) of the land and work has started (with 80% of the pre-operation stage completed) before the EIA submission. This is an offence under the EQA 34(A)(6).**

How the company is allowed to start work even before the EIA has been approved is a mystery and requires clarification from the DOE.

We are very concerned that the EIA process will rubber stamp the mining operations and will legitimise the illegal works that have been going on.

Based on SAM's review of the EIA, we would like to also highlight three other major serious concerns about the proposed project.

Based on the information provided, it is evident that the proposed mining operation will affect the ecosystem to a state which will be irreparable following the environmental destruction.

The water modelling results show serious concerns about water pollution, even with the proposed mitigation measures in place. **Many parameters, especially the heavy metals will exceed the baseline levels and be classified as Class V, the most polluted level when the mining operation begins. This is a serious concern especially when the Lebir Water Treatment Plant is located just 1-km away downstream from the project site.** Further, the recent case of flooding at the downstream area of Sg. Kelantan raises a further concern on the water pollution issue. While the proposed project may not be affected by the flood, the project can potentially increase the frequency of flash floods in the downstream area, as confirmed by the EIA. Acid Mine Drainage is another serious concern stemming from the mining industry.

As confirmed in the EIA, ***"The project site is a wildlife habitat, and the proposed mining is an intrusion into the wildlife natural habitats."*** The study area inhabits wildlife like Asian Elephants, Clouded Leopards, Small Clawed Otters, Dusky Langur, Sun Bears, and Tapirs, where most of these animals are categorized as near threatened, vulnerable and endangered wild animals under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red Data Book 2020. Besides that, most species of birds recorded in the study area are totally protected or protected by the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010 (Act 716). Further, it will also exacerbate

human-wildlife conflict as there was already a record of complaints on human-wildlife conflict within a 5-km radius around the project site. The idea of the whole project to establish a mining site at a location which is an Environmentally Sensitive Area Rank 3 can lead to adverse ecological impacts.

Moreover, from the socio-economic perspective, the EIA reveals that 53% of the respondents consulted disagreed with the proposed project.

To compound matters further, the proposed site could also be part of the territory of the indigenous communities who reside close to the project site. With an Orang Asli Village nearby, this area provides them with their sources of livelihoods and clean water supply. There should not be any issuance of licenses to companies that can disrupt the customary rights of the indigenous peoples in the area.

Based on the above, SAM calls for the following actions:

- 1. We urge the Department of Environment to not approve the EIA report and to reject it.**
- 2. The project proponent should be directed to rehabilitate the area that has been cleared and stern action should be taken against them for starting the project before acquiring approvals.**
- 3. The Kelantan state government should take note of the ongoing environmental and social issues brought about by open cast mining projects around the world and from previous local experiences. We call on the Kelantan state government and the Jabatan Mineral dan Geosains Malaysia to not allow this mining operation to continue.**

We would like to alert the public that the notification and executive summary of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report of this proposed project are currently being displayed by the Department of Environment (DOE). The full EIA report of the proposed project can be accessed online and the deadline for the public feedback submission is 15 June 2021. For more information, please check out <https://bit.ly/2SiMrAQ>.

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