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**Press Release**

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**DO NOT ALLOW PROPOSED MINING OF LANTHANIDE IN MUKIM KENERING, HULU PERAK**

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) calls on the Department of Environment (DOE) to not allow the proposed mining of lanthanide at Mukim Kenering in Hulu Perak.

This project involves in-situ leaching (ISL) and beneficiation of lanthanide, which leads to serious environmental degradation and destruction, contrary to claims by mining proponents.

In-situ leaching was first used in the US in the 1950's, where most of the projects have caused numerous spills and contamination of groundwater sources. ISL requires the injection of mining chemical solutions into the ground which flushes out the intended mineral to be further processed. This method is uncommon and is relatively new to Malaysia, and requires greater scrutiny.

SAM has learnt about the proposed mining project in Kenering from the detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which was displayed online for public feedback since 7 July 2021. The mining project is being carried out by MCRE Resources Sdn. Bhd.

SAM has conveyed its concerns to the DOE as regards the grave environmental impacts of this proposed mining activity.

The size of the proposed site spans across a total area of 2,162 hectares, which is situated in the Central Forest Spines (CFS) range, and it has been classified as an Environmentally Sensitive Area Rank 1. To avoid significant disturbance and damage to the surrounding environment, only controlled activities like low impact nature tourism, research and education purposes activities are allowed within ESA Rank 1 area and mining cannot be considered as a low impact activity.

The CFS must be totally protected and it is indeed shocking that such mining activity is being conceived in a very environmentally sensitive area.

This project will also exacerbate negative impacts to the diverse wildlife which inhabits the proposed site. Based on the EIA, endangered, vulnerable, and nearly threatened species like the Malayan tigers, panthers, elephants, tapirs, sun bears, and wild boars are found at the proposed site area. Besides that, 194 types of bird species that have been listed as totally protected and 11 other bird species listed as protected under the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010 (Act716) will be affected if this project is allowed to be carried out.

Also of major concern is the contamination of rivers, which are an important water source for the local communities at nearby settlements from Kampung Pong and Kampung Orang Asli Bukit Asu who also fish and carry out recreation activities.

The project is located upstream of Sungai Rui, a tributary of Sungai Perak. Therefore, any degradation of the surface water or groundwater resulting from the proposed mining could affect the whole or a very large portion of these watersheds and their ecosystems. Any uncontrolled accidental release of reactant (e.g., sulphuric acid) during set-up and operations could have catastrophic consequences for communities downstream.

The proposed activity has a high risk of increasing the concentrations of ammonium and radionuclides such as thorium in the existing environment. This will directly affect the local communities and their access to drinking water. The project will be using ammonium sulphate as the key chemical, and the groundwater modelling results in the EIA already show a high risk of ammonium and sulphate contamination in Well 2 and 3 used by plantations within the proposed mining area.

For the above reasons, SAM reiterates its call for the EIA for the project to be rejected and not allow any mining activity at the proposed site.

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