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Press Release

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LANDSLIDE TRAGEDIES: NEED FOR STRINGENT PROTECTION OF HILLS AND HILLSLOPES

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) is very saddened to learn about the landslide at KM34 of the Simpang Pulai-Blue Valley road leading to Cameron Highlands, in which a lorry driver is believed to have been trapped under the rubble.

Despite the many incidents of landslides in Cameron Highlands and its vicinity, it is clear that not enough measures have been taken to prevent the occurrence of such tragedies.

Often, we hear of landslides and slope failures happening following continuous rainfalls not only in Camerons but also in other parts the country. The occurrence of rainfalls is not uncommon and is to be expected but that cannot be the primary cause of landslides and slope failures.

In order for landslides and slope failures to happen and be triggered by continuous rainfall, there must have been disturbances to the natural terrain in the area concerned.

We call on the authorities to investigate immediately the tragedy in Km 34 and make public the findings.

In particular, we are concerned as to whether any land-clearings for agriculture activities or other developments may have taken place, which need to be halted, and for protective and rehabilitative measures to be taken immediately.

SAM also calls on the relevant authorities in Cameron Highlands and the surrounding areas to monitor all high-risk areas and take measures to prevent the occurrence of other landslides or slope failures.

We all must know by now that highlands and hill areas are environmentally sensitive, and very prone to landslides and slope failures.

With the advent of climate change, heavy rainfalls with increased frequency and intensity, it is high time that our authorities act with utmost caution and strictly control developments on hill lands and highlands, carry out more frequent monitoring and firmly enforce existing laws and regulations. We should halt the conversions of hill lands and highlands and must strictly control existing activities. Otherwise, we will be inviting further tragedies.

Meenakshi Raman
President
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