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For Environmental Justice

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Press Conference

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FOREST DESTRUCTION THREATENS WATER SUPPLY

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) urges the Kedah State government to immediately stop the destruction of forests and logging activities in the State to protect these natural resources and ensure sufficient water supply.

The 2015 Annual Report of the Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia states that the forested land area in Kedah covers 342,431 hectares or 36.33% of the total land area of the state. This indicates that the forest cover in the state is at an alarming rate and if further deforestation is not curbed it will lead to a more precarious situation.

Director of the Forestry Department of Kedah in a press statement in February 2016 mentioned that more than 2,000 hectares of forest in the state's forest reserves had been encroached and cleared for development of new agricultural areas.

Apart from reducing the total forest area which threatens biodiversity and wildlife, deforestation also affects water resources and contributes to soil erosion, sedimentation, slope failure and landslides.

SAM is disappointed that although the state's water crisis is currently acute, but until now no effective measures and planning has been made by the government to address the issue.

In addition to threatening the environment and causing flash floods in several areas of the state, logging and land clearing has also affected the lives of thousands of water users including paddy farmers.

In recent years frequent flash floods occur at villages nearby logging areas, causing heavy losses to the residents whose belongings, properties and crops have been damaged.

SAM's survey found that deforestation for plantation development and logging has seriously affected watersheds and villagers' water supply has been contaminated with mud. Villagers in Kampung Ulu Mahang in Kulim and Kampung Teluk Teduri in Baling are concerned that the community water supply sourced from the forest near their village will be affected by the destruction of the forests here.

SAM's survey also found that the hills that were cleared have been left idle for long, triggering soil erosion when it rains, subsequently disrupting drainage systems. Rivers in the state have also become shallow due to sedimentation.

Six districts adversely affected by forest destruction and logging in Kedah are Kulim, Baling, Sik, Langkawi, Padang Terap and Kubang Pasu. The water level at the Pedu Dam had dropped drastically during the drought earlier this year. We are concerned that if this persists, it could affect rice production and thus the livelihood of MADA farmers.

In addition to calling for an immediate halt of deforestation and logging activities, SAM also objects to any new projects planned, including the proposed Naok Dam in Pendang and plantation and mining projects in Gunung Inas Forest Reserve in Kulim.

These projects will not only destroy the environment and watersheds but also affect agricultural production, life and livelihoods of people in three states, namely Kedah, Perlis and Penang.

Construction of new dams is not a solution to water problems in the State. Forests and natural resources should be restored, protected and conserved for future generations.

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President
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