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Press Release

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**BALING FLOODS - MAKE FINDINGS PUBLIC**

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) is most disappointed that our call for a public commission of inquiry (COI) on the Baling floods in Kedah has been dismissed by the Kedah state government, as well as the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (MENR).

SAM, had on Wednesday, 6 July, called on the Kedah state government to hold a COI to get to the root causes of the Baling floods. We made this call to avert another tragedy of this kind, and not simply blame Mother Nature, especially since the intensity and frequency of unusual rainfalls due to climate change will be a recurring problem.

The Baling floods had not only resulted in the loss of three lives, but has damaged hundreds of homes and properties of villagers nearby Gunung Inas, as well as caused the disruption water supplies to consumers in Kedah and Penang due to turbid waters of the Sungai Muda.

The Kedah MB, Datuk Seri Muhammad Sanusi Md Noor, had initially responded that the cause of the floods was due to a “water surge phenomenon” with the accumulation of water upstream following the rains, similar to the Gunung Jerai tragedy last year.

Since then, the MB has been reported to have raised questions over the development of the Musang King’ durian plantation by a joint-venture company in Gunung Inas, including as to whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was done prior to the massive during-farming project.

According to media reports, Sanusi said that “his administration was unsure as to how such (a) project had obtained approval, which prompted his administration to issue the company with a stop-work order in July 2020” and that he believed “that every plantation requires an EIA (report). How was the EIA approved? There is a regulation in the law which states that any highland ground over 1,000 feet (304 metres) must not be touched.”

While we welcome the MB’s questions and action taken to issue a stop-work order, what we need to know is whether follow-up measures were taken against the company to hold them accountable and if any preventive measures were taken to rehabilitate the lands that were cleared on such high slopes?

It is precisely for these reasons that SAM called for a COI, to raise all the right questions and get the needed responses.

Sanusi has said that there is no need for such a COI, given that the various government agencies involved are preparing their reports over the incident.

**SAM is of the view that preparing such report and submitting to the MB alone is not enough.**

**The public needs to know what happened and why it happened and who was responsible for the devastation and deaths that has been caused.**

**The Kedah MB needs to be transparent over this, and be accountable to the public.**

**All the facts must come to light. It is not enough to blame the previous government for any action or inaction. This government must right the wrongs.**

**What is needed is for strong action to be taken against all those responsible for their environmental crimes and negligence.**

**SAM therefore calls on the Kedah MB to make public all the findings and to restore public confidence in the state's administration.**

We must avert future tragedies of this kind by protecting environmentally sensitive ecosystems, such as hills and mountains, and not allow plantations of any kind in these areas.

Immediate rehabilitation measures are needed in the Gunung Inas Forest reserve.

**Meenakshi Raman  
President  
Sahabat Alam Malaysia**