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**Press Release**

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### **STOP APPROVING HILL CLEARING IN CAMERON HIGHLANDS**

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) is distressed to learn about the occurrence of a landslide in Blue Valley in Cameron Highlands, early this morning that has led to 4 persons being buried so far.

While the cause of the landslide is yet to be determined, SAM is gravely concerned that hill clearings in Cameron's for all kinds of projects including for agriculture and construction development could be responsible for the landslide-prone Highlands, especially during heavy rains.

In fact, in January last year, the Yang Di Pertuan Agong, Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah, had directed that there be a review of all projects on the hill areas and highlands in Cameron Highlands, following heavy rains, fearing the likelihood of disasters happening. His Royal Highness had voiced his concerns about the widespread clearing of hill land for agriculture and other projects and had called for a review of all approvals while adding that this was enough!

Clearly, it appears that this directive from the country's highest authority does not seem to have been heeded.

The President of SAM herself was in Cameron Highlands in the new year this year and was shocked to see so much overdevelopment, with hill clearing for agriculture and massive construction going on, including in the Blue Valley area.

The old charm of Cameron Highlands is gone, with lush forests being replaced by hill clearings and scarred landscapes for agriculture crops, housing and building construction projects.

Complaints from visitors were heard about the ugly sights, as well as how the Highlands are not as cool anymore with the loss of the natural greens.

The State and local authorities must be hauled up again for allowing so much over-development on what is a highly environmentally sensitive area, especially when climate change impacts are more apparent now, with unprecedented rainfall intensities.

SAM echoes the concerns expressed by our King, and calls on the authorities to stop any further approvals of clearings for all kinds of projects, and for a thorough review of approvals given in the past.

We all call for a Task-Force to be set up to conduct the review and make public the findings.

Further, immediate steps must be taken to rehabilitate the risky slopes and for preventive action to avert future landslides and slope failures, including by the Federal authorities.

**Meenakshi Raman**  
**President,**  
**Sahabat Alam Malaysia**