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Keng Yaik-Lojing

KELANTAN TOLD TO PREVENT SOIL EROSION AT BUKIT LOJING

KUALA LUMPUR, May 25 (Bernama) -- Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik today urged the Kelantan State Government to take immediate steps to curb further environmental degradation caused by massive development and logging activities at the Lojing highlands area in Gua Musang, Kelantan.

He said the massive development and logging activities at the highland had been seen as destruction of the environment which caused severe siltation and erosion problems at the site and surrounding areas.

"They should either do some replanting or quickly do something to prevent soil erosion," he said when asked to comment on the Cabinet's decision to set up a technical committee to preserve Lojing highlands.

He was speaking to reporters after opening the new headquarters of Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan) in Cheras, here.

Keng Yaik said the ministry did not have any power to curb any haphazard development involving massive land-clearing as the jurisdiction was under the state government.

"Even if the state government insists on gazetting the forest reserve, the ministry can only coordinate while the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is under the jurisdiction of the Science, Technology and Environment Ministry.

"However, the ministry through its agencies such as Forestry Department and Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) can supply the technical inputs," he said.

The Cabinet on May 16, had decided that a technical committee comprising representatives from the relevant agencies including the Primary Industries Ministry, Departments of Environment, Forestry, Drainage and Irrigation as well as the local authorities to be set up to look into the indiscriminate land-clearing in Lojing.

The decision was based on a report submitted by a committee, set up to monitor the situation in Lojing in 1994, which stated that severe siltation and erosion problems were still going on despite assurances from the State Government to stop them.

The indiscriminate land-clearing in Lojing was first highlighted in August 1994 when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expressed his concern over state governments which allowed development on hillslopes despite repeated reminders not to do so. -- BERNAMA

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