

03/05/1998

Study on catchment areas set to begin

KLANG, Sat. - A committee comprising representatives from universities, non-governmental organisations and relevant Government departments has been set up by the Selangor Government to carry out research in water catchment areas.

The committee will head for water catchment areas, especially the Sungai Lalang Forest Reserve which comes under the administration of the Selangor Tengah Forestry Office, next week.

Selangor Agriculture and Fishery, Research and Development Committee chairman Datuk Abdul Fatah Iskandar, who heads the committee, said the work would take between a week and one month.

"The findings of the committee will be handed to Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar in two months," he added.

Prof Dr Mohammad Ali Hassan of Universiti Malaya's Geology Department is also in the committee.

He said the committee was set up in view of the comments by public and Prof Mohammad Ali that development and logging activities should not be carried out within 10 kilometres of a water catchment area.

Abdul Fatah reiterated that there were no logging activities in water catchment areas of Batu, Sungai Langat, Klang Gate and Ampang Intake Water Treatment Plant.

He said even the logging activities approved at the Sungai Lalang Forest Reserve was 3.5km away from the water catchment area.

However, he added, following the outcry, the Selangor Government has ordered such activities at the Sungai Lalang Forest Reserve be stopped last Monday.

The 232 ha of land was given under a long-term logging agreement to Syarikat Kim Guan Huat Sdn Bhd on November 11, 1997 and valid till May 31, 1998.

Abdul Fatah said all logging activities had been stopped pending the committee's findings and recommendations.

"I am going to recommend that in future, all trees that are allowed to be logged should be tagged and trees only above 50cm in diameters are to be logged," he said, adding that presently trees with a diameter of between 32cm and 45cm were allowed to be logged.

Presently, he added, in each hectare of land given for logging, at least 30 to 40 trees were not logged.

"I am also going to propose that a minimum of 40 trees should not be logged in each hectare of land given for logging activities," he said.

In the Sungai Lalang Forest Reserve, Abdul Fatah said, 10,000 trees had been replanted.

In Terengganu, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad said the State Government commended the move to set a National Water Council.

"The State Government will give its full support and assistance in finding solution to the problem. However, we will only know our specific role in the council after first meeting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad later.

"In view of this, the State Government has not fixed the price of water which will be supplied by Terengganu without having the whole picture."

Terengganu has 18 water treatment plants that supply 342,000 cubic metres per day and 70 million cubic metres were used yearly.

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