

# 250ha of forest reserve devastated

COMMUNITY

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LOGGING with the sanction of the previous Selangor state government has devastated a large part of the Sungai Jelok Forest Reserve in the Hulu Langat district.

“This is for a proposed rubber estate project by Perbadanan Kemajuan Pertanian Selangor (PKPS). Following the exco decision, the Selangor Forestry Department issued a logging permit to a private company,” Lee said during a site visit to the forest reserve.

Lee, the state assemblyman for Kajang, said the logging activities were reported to the PAC in November last year, and by that time, 90% of the trees had been felled and bare patches had begun to dot the 250ha forest reserve.

“This is shocking because there is no point in gazettement a forest reserve and then allowing logging activities to be carried out with the weak excuse of purportedly developing a rubber estate,” Lee said.

The Sungai Jelok Forest Reserve is a hilly lowland dipterocarp forest. Its size has shrunk over the years due to development and logging activities. The forest reserve is a water catchment area for Sungai Jelok, a tributary of Sungai Langat.

“After July 16 last year, Sungai Jelok overflowed its banks with alarming frequency.

“We attributed this to land-clearing activities near the Kajang Prison but now we are sure the logging in the forest reserve is also a contributing factor,” Lee said.

At present, upgrading work is going on at Sungai Jelok to alleviate the floods in Kajang.

The logging is now viewed as a setback to the river-widening and deepening work.

Lee said he would seek the state auditor’s help to investigate the matter further and to seek clarification from the PKPS director and Selangor Forestry Department director as to why a forest reserve and water catchment area had to be sacrificed.

“Both the Hulu Langat Land Office and District Office have been instructed by the state government not to allow activities against sustainable development and yet this had happened,” Lee said.

“It is bad enough that one part of the forest reserve has been turned into a stone quarry,” he said.

On Dec 19 last year, Selangor Forestry Department director Mohd Yunus Zakaria replied to Lee’s letter on the logging activities in the forest reserve, saying that a logging licence was issued based on a decision made at the exco meeting on Nov 8, 2006. No further detail was given.

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