

# Dire need for action plan

**I** REFER to the report "Cameron Highlands at high risk" (*The Star*, Dec 11).

The issue of water pollution due to land-clearing and agricultural activities in Cameron Highlands is long standing.

These activities not only impact water quality but the general environment as well.

Unfortunately, public awareness is raised when a direct impact on the general population becomes imminent.

Most people will adopt an "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" attitude. We would be naive to think that there are no consequences to our environmental exploits.

The seriousness of the environmental impact has reached such a chronic level that the sanctity of the area as a popular tourist destination is now in jeopardy.

Besides an observable increase in turbidity levels, other sources of pollution such as sewage and sullage sources also enter the water column directly, as previously revealed in a rapid assessment study of Sg. Terla.

This results in an increase of

organic and ammonia levels which further impede the potability of the raw water source.

As mentioned in the report, other contaminants such as pesticides and herbicides also make their way in.

The majority of water treatment systems in Malaysia use conventional treatment technology and are incapable of removing these contaminants.

This means there is a real risk of these constituents entering the water distribution network.

Chlorination from the treatment system process may also react with elevated organics producing carcinogenic substances such as trihalomethanes (THMs); setting aside the carcinogenic properties of some pesticides/herbicides themselves.

Because these contaminants are at trace levels, they are often difficult to detect.

Land-clearing activities also cause habitat destruction and potentially the destruction of precious flora as well.

Malaysia is ranked third in the MNN/Infographic list of "Top 20 countries with most endangered

species" (second in plant species).

Some of these species may be indigenous to Cameron Highlands and its surrounding areas.

It is well understood that agricultural activities are a source of income for the residents within Cameron Highlands.

However, if the destruction continues, the area will lose its attraction as a tourist destination.

If this happens, not only will the farmers be affected but the entire tourism industry within the valley.

For Muslims, as the *khalifa* of the earth, it is our responsibility to ensure the protection of the environment and other living creatures.

We have to ensure that our children and their children will be able to experience and enjoy the wonders of nature which have been entrusted to us.

Without superbly proper, coordinated planning and implementation, agricultural and developmental activities in Cameron Highlands are simply no longer feasible.

This is obvious from the current situation. Issuance of work permits

and approvals must be stopped and current problems dealt with and remediated first.

Mitigation measures must account for the "cumulative impact" of all sources present.

Otherwise, even with the implementation of erosion and sediment control strategies (ESCP), river reserves (that act as buffer zones) or sedimentation ponds; there is no guarantee that the water quality conditions will be restored to 'normal'.

There is too much activity occurring within the area, that without careful planning and even with these strategies in place, certain river reaches may not be rehabilitated.

Therefore, there is a dire need to establish an integrated and sustainable environmental action plan for Cameron Highlands, that must involve and have the commitment of all stakeholders, for the sake of future generations.

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**> Save Cameron Highlands**  
Much had been highlighted in the press abt illegal land clearing in Cameron Highlands but nothing done 2 curb it.

What a disgrace! The illegal land clearing in Cameron Highlands is so obvious yet no action has been taken.

The law must come down hard on those responsible for the destruction of Cameron Highlands. Tomorrow may be too late. - William Ong.

**> Joke gone wrong**  
Nobody has the right to poke fun by impersonating another person. The mental agony can be disastrous.

**> Ruined social life**  
My friends r now planning 2 move out of Kota Baru coz they don't want 2 b prosecuted by PAS even when on a picnic. PAS killed my social life!

**> It's putu mayam**  
With regards the article 'Putu Mayang on the go', the Indian delicacy string hoppers is actually called 'Putu Mayam'.

**> Be firm on retirement age**