

Illegal Logging: Environmentalists say there is something rotten in Forestry Dept

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Sahabat Alam Malaysia president Meenakshi Raman said the government should acknowledge and recognise the use of frontline communities, such the indigenous people, to combat illegal logging. - NSTP/ZUNNUR AL SHAFIQ

KUALA LUMPUR: ENVIRONMENTAL groups are blaming corruption in agencies entrusted to protect the nation's green cover for the shocking number of illegal logging cases recorded every year.

With Malaysia recording 90 cases of illegal logging last year, they said this was the root cause of the high number of cases.

Among the agencies they flagged was the Forestry Department.

This comes after Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad revealed the numbers in the Dewan Rakyat here yesterday.

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Centre for Environment, Technology and Development Malaysia chairman Gurmit Singh said the high number of illegal logging cases was nothing new.

"The number of cases might be higher as not all are reported or identified.

"The main cause is corruption in the Forestry Department.

"As long as you allow that (corruption) to continue, enforcers themselves turn their away from these activities.

"You need to stop corruption."

Gurmit questioned the government's effort as the number of cases had not dropped throughout the years.

"What are they doing about it and why are they allowing it?"

Yesterday, Nik Nazmi said of the 90 cases last year, 60 were recorded in Sarawak.

Perak recorded the second highest number of cases at 11 while Kelantan logged 10.



Centre for Environment, Technology and Development Malaysia chairman Gurmit Singh said the high number of illegal logging cases in Malaysia was nothing new nor was it surprising. - NSTP/OWEE AH CHUN

In a written reply to the Dewan Rakyat, he said, the criminals involved had been charged under the National Forestry Act 1984 in Peninsular Malaysia and the Forest Ordinance 2015 in Sarawak and the Forest Enactment 1968.

Sahabat Alam Malaysia president Meenakshi Raman said the government should acknowledge and recognise the use of frontline communities, such as indigenous people, to combat illegal logging.

She said they were among those most affected by the matter because loggers had encroached on their native customary rights land.

"Indigenous people are the most affected people because they live in the forests.

"The government has to acknowledge this and work with them to combat illegal logging," she said.

Meenakshi said: "The fact that the number of cases in Sarawak is high is appalling.

"This signals that the authorities are not doing their job because if they are monitoring and enforcing, then it would not go on.

"We should monitor the activities and enforce the law,"she said.