

Perak to act against lake's illegal loggers

BUKIT MERAH: MB vows stern action against those linked to drying up of lake

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THE Perak government will not tolerate any illegal logging activities that contributed to the Bukit Merah lake drying up.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Zambray Abd Kadir said if indeed illegal logging had occurred, stern action would be taken.

"The problem of Bukit Merah lake drying up should be seen as a whole.

"Aside from the long period of dry weather, excessive sedimentation at the century-old man-made lake is also one of the reasons that caused the lake to dry up," said Zambray after visiting the lake and nearby affected padi fields.

He said the lake was undergoing the third phase of peat swamp cleaning works under a RM10 million al-

location from the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry.

"Due to its age, dredging exercise could not be carried out."

Zambray was replying to claims from Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) that encroachment on the lake's water catchment area was the cause of the lake drying up.

SAM field researcher Meor Razak Meor Rahman said 500ha of peat swamp near the lake had been illegally cleared and dried up to make way for cash crops and oil palm trees.

Meor Razak said that the neighbouring Pondok Tanjung Forest Reserve, which is also the main water-catchment area for the lake, was also affected by development and agri-



culture projects.

Zambray added that as a long-term measure to avoid the lake from drying up, the state had suggested that the Federal Government create a tunnel for water to flow from Sungai Perak into the lake.

"The cost of constructing the tunnel from Sungai Perak to the lake is about RM300 million," he said, adding that the state was also looking into the possibility of building more reservoirs in the area.

"The Perak Water Board will study the possibility of carrying out a riverbank filtration project that allows us to draw water from underground."

Zambray said a similar project had been successfully carried out in Kuala Kangsar, where 25 million litres of water was drawn daily.

On the possibility of water rationing here, Zambray reiterated that it would only be carried out if the water level reached the critical level.

Since April 25, he said, water level at Bukit Merah had improved daily, and raised from 6.07m to 6.31m yesterday.

He added that cloud-seeding operations would be continued in the area.