

'Probe claims that logging affected Sg Pahang water level'

KUANTAN: Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob has ordered an investigation following a report that alleged that the critical drop in Sungai Pahang's water level was caused by excessive logging and land clearing, particularly in Ulu Tembeling.

"I have read the newspaper report published three days ago, but before any conclusion can be made, I have ordered agencies to investigate and prepare a technical report for the state government.

"It is not fair to say that only Sungai Pahang is experiencing a critical drop in water level when the whole country is experiencing extreme hot weather due to El Nino.

"We must be fair to all parties. We must allow an investigation to take place before any conclusion can be made on the matter," he said after a charity golf event between the menteri besar team and the alumni of SM Sains Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah here yesterday.

Adnan, however, did not deny that there was logging and land clearing for palm oil and rubber cultivation there, alongside hydroelectric projects in Jelai and Tekal.

"Land clearing for cultivation and development is necessary, ever since the inception of the Federal Land Development Authority. However, it is important to keep it in balance with water catchment areas."

He said two years after he was appointed menteri besar, about 300,000ha of forests in the state were gazetted as water catchment areas.

It was reported that Sungai Pahang had become shallow due to a number of factors, including logging, land clearing and soil erosion.

On criticism of the state government's lackadaisical attitude over the issue, Adnan said: "As the menteri besar, the blame is always on me, even if a chicken gets hit by a lorry.

"I have no plans to get involved in the matter (drop in Sungai Pahang's water level). That was not caused by me. The people can be assured that they will always be the main priority of the state government."