

# Lakes need special care

I REFER to the front page report "Logging out a forest reserve" (*The Star*, May 16) on logging activities in the Ulu Muda Forest Reserve that are threatening the Ulu Muda, Pedu and Ahnin chain of lakes.

The issue must be viewed with the greatest concern especially when the lakes are described as the "lifeline" to the water needs of three states, Kedah, Perlis and Penang.

A careful browse of the Google Earth map can provide clues as to whether the removal of massive quantities of logs from the area is capable of causing adverse impacts on the lake waters. The question is to what extent logging activities in Ulu Muda can threaten the long-term integrity of the lakes and dams in fulfilling their functions.

Parts of the Ulu Muda Forest Reserve that form the catchment areas surrounding the lakes have to be secured against any form of land use activities. These are protected forests.

The remaining areas are harvestable production forests, except those "spots" found to contain particularly rare or threatened spe-



cies. These latter areas are identified as high value conservation forests and are to be preserved.

There is no deforestation in forest reserves. Logging is strictly restricted and controlled, embracing the principles of sustainable forest management and reduced-impact logging so that the forest will remain a renewable source of income.

The photograph showing the lake's coastal area indicating barren land cannot be a result of deforestation,

otherwise the lake would have long been affected. It looks like a dried-up part of the lake after a lengthy spell of drought.

But this doesn't mean we should dispel any fear or concern over impending danger to the lakes.

The report is a timely reminder of what precautions the authorities ought to take in anticipation of untoward developments that could well give rise to untold disasters that would affect the economy and safety of the population below.

A careful scrutiny of the Google Earth map reveals barely discernible logging tracts in the south of Tasik Muda, creeping up to within 4km as the crow flies, of the edge of the lake.

There is an intense network of logging tracts in the south and some are crossing at several points the small river (marked as Tasik Muda River) in the inland area that feeds Tasik Muda. This is a potential cause of sedimentation to the lake.

What appear as logging and land development activities along the western borders of Tasik Pedu and to the north-west of Tasik Ahning look ominously threatening.

It is well understood that forests are indispensable sources of revenue for the state but special care is needed in the case of the lake areas.

Conservation forestry is imperative for Ulu Muda. There must be no room whatsoever for lapses in control and supervision over logging activities.

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