

# Can we afford to lose our valuable forests?

September 14, 2021 @ 12:04am



Forests are key sources of income and food for the indigenous people. -NSTP file pic

**LETTERS:** Thanks to technological advancements, Google satellites have supplied us with clear images of what's happening in the deepest parts of our forests.

There are several instances of deforestation in Malaysia, and, interestingly, they occur within or near gazetted zones.

We should be concerned when we see logging activities in holiday spots such as Tasik Chini and Cameron Highlands in Pahang or the natural attractions in Yan, Kedah.

The main reason for the exploitation of forests is profit, by making way for the vast planting of oil palm and agribusiness that provide better economic returns.

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Apart from that, deforestation is intentionally carried out to create housing estates.

According to the World Wildlife Fund, forests have provided humanity with shelter, livelihood, a source of water and food, and fuel security.



It is also a habitat for wildlife and a source of income for humans, particularly the indigenous people. Globally, forests provide jobs for more than 13 million people and, more significantly, function as the world's second largest carbon storehouse after the oceans.

There are negative consequences if forest reserves continue to dwindle. It will affect the balance of biodiversity. Forests are also the habitat of a diverse range of animals and plants.

Forest exploration disrupts wildlife ecosystems, resulting in the extinction of endangered species. Deforestation exacerbates soil erosion, which may cause landslides and floods, as well as affect the fertility of agricultural soil.

Forest fires in national forest reserves across the world are one of the indicators of uncontrolled forest exploration. Pollution in forests degrades water quality and disrupts the water cycle, which supplies us with water for drinking and daily activities.

The critical point is that if forests continue to be mercilessly targeted, it will emit greenhouse gases, which contribute to natural calamities, including extreme weather, food supply disruption and wildfires.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2018 special report stated that carbon emissions must be cut by half, effectively by 2030, so that net zero emissions are achieved by 2050.

If emissions are not reduced, a temperature rise of 1.5°C may be reached within a decade.

We have already felt and seen the consequences of natural disasters such as floods, landslides and climate change. These have not only claimed lives but have also incurred huge losses in terms of socio-economy.

Non-governmental organisations, academics and local communities have expressed alarm over uncontrolled deforestation. IPCC's warning should serve as a wake-up call for us.

Climate change is an undeniable truth; its consequences are being seen the world over and we must act to avert more damage.

While sustainable economic growth is a goal shared by many, including Malaysia, conducting forest exploration without monitoring is inappropriate, given the critical role of forests in maintaining biodiversity.

By continuing to exploit forests, are we willing to accept worsening situations that will inevitably undercut sustainability goals that underpin our shared prosperity vision?

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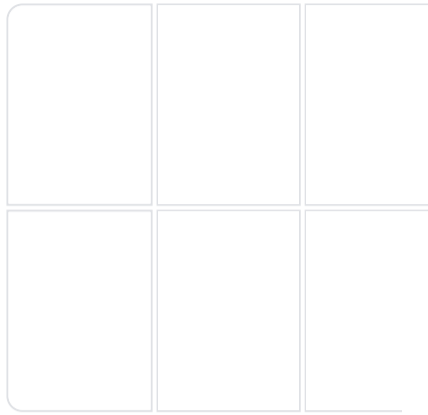
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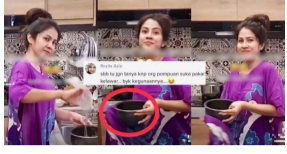
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