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Garbage contributed to mud flood

Plastic sheet covers from the farms contributed to the recent flooding at Cameron Highlands. — Picture by Marcus Pheong

CAMERON HIGHLANDS — Rubbish dumping at Ringlelet Lake and uncontrolled agricultural activities at river reserves were among the causes for the mud flood incident in Cameron Highlands on Wednesday.

Deputy Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid said the water tunnel from Ringlelet Lake was clogged by the increased amount of sediments and garbage, causing water to suddenly rise and be forcibly released in stages.

“Two tonnes of garbage are removed from the dam each week and on the night of the incident, three tonnes were taken out,” he said at the Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) office in Habu yesterday.

“The water level on Wednesday reached 3,509 feet (1,069.54m), so the dam gate was opened to release water.”

Mahdzir said the relevant government agencies need to find a holistic solution to the problem of rampant agricultural activities at river reserves to avoid mud floods each year.

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“If there is no long-term solution to the problem, mud floods will recur. If the farmers are to move, they will have to move everything, including setting up new farms in other areas,” he said.

“There are just too many agricultural activities on the right and left banks of the river. During long, heavy downpours, the plastic covers from the farms go into the lake and clog the water tunnel.”

Mahdzir said TNB had made various improvements in the Bertam Valley area, such as dredging out sand from Ringle Lake and procuring certain infrastructure at a cost of RM40 million, as well as installing warning sirens and 38 flood-warning signboards.

He said TNB offered to fund the construc-

tion of new buildings for SJK(C) Bertam Valley at a suitable site.

Mahdzir said TNB had followed the set procedure in releasing water from the Sultan Abu Bakar Dam on the day of the incident.

“We collaborated with various government agencies in Cameron Highlands, including the Fire and Rescue Department, police and Civil Defence Department, and water was released from the dam accordingly.”

Residents living along the banks of the Bertam River were ordered to evacuate when water at the Sultan Abu Bakar Dam had to be released in stages because of rising water following heavy rain.

— Bernama