



# Forest Governance Integrity

by Transparency International Malaysia

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## Forest Governance Walk

**Dec 7, 2013** – Over 350 Malaysians participated in Transparency International-Malaysia’s (TI-M) Anti-Corruption and Forest Governance Walk at Taman Rekreasi Bukit Jalil, organised in collaboration with NKRA against Corruption on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

Themed “A Nation Free of Corruption Starts with You”, the walk saw the participation of families and individuals who went on the 1.5km walk, symbolizing their commitment to end corruption.

TI-M’s President, Dato’ Akhbar sent out a clear message in his welcoming speech saying, “You, the Rakyat, are part of the changing drive. We must all stand as one and pledge against zero tolerance to corruption which includes zero tolerance to accepting bribes, and zero tolerance to giving bribes.”



YB Senator Datuk Paul Low Seng Kuan (Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department) and Dato’ Hjh Sutinah Sutan (Deputy Chief Commissioner of Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission) “flag off” the walk together with Dato’ Akhbar Satar (TI-M President)



This year’s Walk stressed the need for good forest governance, with the aim of increasing public awareness and knowledge of systematic corruption in the forest sector and what can be done to improve governance irregularities. Led by the Forest Governance Integrity (FGI) Project Manager, Victor Soosai, and TI-M’s Exco member, Dr Pola Singh, the team set up a booth on the day to recruit volunteers for the FGI-Forest Watch Project. Over 50 people signed up as VFMs during the walk.

FGI team on the day of walk

The Forest Watch project acts as a tool for the public to report and monitor forest-related activities. These volunteers will serve as guardians of the forests and watch out for suspicious activities that could potentially threaten Malaysia’s forests. The ultimate goal is to work towards a society where corruption-free forest governance and sustainable management enables increased economic development, poverty reduction and environmental protection. Dr Pola said that the project tackles corruption as a primary driver of illegal logging and poor forest management. “Cognizant of the need to enhance transparency, integrity and accountability in the country’s forest governance systems, TI-M had embarked on a Forest Governance Integrity (FGI) Project for the past four years,” he added.



**Public that signed up as Voluntary Forest Monitor (VFM)**

The high public turnout and participation in TI-M’s Anti-Corruption and Forest Governance Walk is representative of public will and desire for change.

## **Expert Group Discussion on Land Use and Land Use Change**

**Nov 21, 2013** – The 4<sup>th</sup> Expert Group discussion on Land Use and Land Use Change (formerly known as Land Capability Classification Survey (LCCS) meeting) was held at the secretariat office of Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M). Eight members attended the meeting comprising senior officers from the Forestry Department Peninsular Malaysia Headquarters, Institute of Foresters Malaysia (IRIM), Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB), and Transparency International-Malaysia.

The Land Use and Land Use Change meetings is a series of expert group discussions to review land use planning and land use change currently practiced in Peninsular Malaysia. State government decisions on land use had traditionally been based on the guidelines contained in the Land Capability Classification Survey (LCCS) Report, issued in 1970 at the start of the Second Malaysia Plan. The LCCS Report had since been superseded by the National Physical Plan (NPP). The latter has undergone a review, and the new version is now known as the NPP-2. The major shortfall of LCCS is the absence of strong environmental



**Expert Discussion Group on the land use in NPP2**

inputs in considerations land use change. Poor planning of land use may threaten forest where Permanent Forest Reserve (PRF) was being de-gazetted or converted to other land-use. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) has indicated that land area of PRF will be increased; however, from the recent public records show, most of the reserved land marked for PRF have yet to be gazetted. These areas will become degraded forest area. Therefore, it is important to address the problems and identify the solutions to address these issues. It may involve recommendations to certain policy reforms. Recommendations will also be forwarded to the state governments as lands are under respective state control. Several states have been identified as “problematic” and the issues in each state will be identified and summarized after the planned state visits. These issues may be brought up to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and also to the National Land Council.

## **Final Workshop for REDD+ Readiness Project in Malaysia**

A workshop on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) readiness project in Malaysia was organized by Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) to gather inputs, guidance and corporation from government institution and NGOs on the readiness of REDD+ project in Malaysia on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2013 at Kuala Lumpur Le Meridien Hotel. REDD+ is a mechanism created under United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to provide incentive for developing countries to protect, better manage and wisely use their forest resources, thus contributing to the global fight against climate change.



TI-M was represented by Dr Pola Singh, Victor Soosai (FGI project manager), Dr Razali bin Abdul Kader (FGI Consultant) and Chak Tze Chin (Senior Project Officer).

*TI-M Exco Dr.Pola Singh with YBhg Datuk Dr. Rahim Bin Haji Nik, the Deputy Secretary General (Environmental Management) who officiated the workshop*

## Forest Watch Task Force Meeting



*The task force team*

**Dec 12, 2013** – The 9th Task Force Meeting was held at Transparency International Malaysia’s office. Victor Soosai, the project manager gave a briefing on the development of Forest Watch Apps on IOS system which is applicable on iPhone and iPad users. These will allow the public to have another access point to submit their reports to TI-M. The team has proposed to form a small unit in each state with one representative to monitor the forest and complaints from public. Suggestion was made to allow SMS alert on Forest Watch Apps to notify the Voluntary Forest Monitors on activities.

## Upcoming conference: “Harmonising State Land Use Policies: Forest conservation in the face of competing claims for land”

Since early this year, an Expert Group has been set up to address trends in land use change, in particular forest conversion that tend to threaten the stability of the forest resource. The Expert Group, hosted by TI-M comprised representatives from the Forestry Department Headquarters, Peninsular Malaysia, Malaysian Timber Industry Board, Malaysian Timber Certification Council, the Department of Agriculture Headquarters, and the Institute of Foresters, Malaysia (IRIM). The direction of the Expert Group’s consultation process is to table the findings of this group at the upcoming conference on land use.

The Conference on “Harmonising States Land Use Policies – Forest conservation in the face of competing claims for land” will be organized by Transparency International Malaysia at Royal Selangor Club, Dewan Tan Sri Hamzah, Bukit Kiara on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

The primary objective of this Conference is to address the problems that current trends in land use change bring about and the diminution of forested areas. These developments give rise to public concern as they threaten the sustainability of the forest resource. This Conference aims to seek a balance where economic development for Malaysia would mean uplifting of living standard that goes hand in hand with sustainability of the forest ecosystem and the environment as a whole. This comes only with strong policies and consistent policy decisions, coordinated efforts of related agencies, good governance and high integrity in implementation. The discussions will cover situations in Peninsular Malaysia only.

# NASA: Deforestation jumps in Malaysia<sup>1</sup>

Deforestation jumped during the first three months of 2013 in Malaysia, Nepal and Mexico, according to a forest tracking tool developed by a team of NASA researchers.

NASA's Quarterly Indicator of Cover Change (QUICC), a MODIS satellite-based product that underpins Mongabay.com's Global Forest Disturbance Alert System (GloF-DAS), picked up strong deforestation signals in five countries during the first quarter of 2013: Malaysia (115 percent increase in deforestation), Nepal (114 percent), Mexico (92 percent), Argentina (72 percent), and Madagascar (51 percent).

According to Christopher Potter, a Senior Research Scientist at NASA Ames Research Center who co-led development of the tool, hotspots in each country include:

- **Argentina:** Large areas of woodland disturbance in La Pampa and Mendoza Provinces and south of the city of San Luis
- **Madagascar:** New areas of forest disturbance in the northeast coastal areas near Antananahaolo
- **Malaysia:** New areas of forest disturbance on the western coastal areas of Perak state
- **Mexico:** Large areas of forest disturbance in the states of San Luis Potosi, Tamaulipas, and Nuevo Leon along the northeast coastal zone
- **Nepal:** Expanded woodland disturbance in the northern Karnali zone near Saldang



However, GloF-DAS also showed large drops in deforestation compared to a year earlier in several key tropical countries, including DRC-Congo (94 percent drop), Thailand (84 percent), Myanmar (81 percent), Vietnam (72 percent), Lao PDR (57 percent), Gabon (52 percent), Nigeria (48 percent), Brazil (42 percent), Colombia (36 percent), and India (37 percent). Further information obtained on discussion with MNRE's officer indicate that deforestation rate has dropped in Malaysia to below 0.4%.

Indonesia, the country with the second-highest rate of forest loss among tropical countries, saw its forest disturbance rise 3 percent during the period. GloF-DAS relies on NASA's Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) sensor to detect changes in forest greenness cover relative to the year-earlier period. It registers change in all forest and woodland areas that have lost at least 40 percent of



<sup>1</sup> <http://news.mongabay.com/2013/0610-glofdas-deforestation-2013Q1.html>

their green vegetation cover over the past year. Seasonal variation is generally mitigated through the product's quarterly baseline, although changes in some parts of the world, like boreal regions, can be affected by snow and ice distribution.

The tool can help highlight areas where deforestation and forest degradation is occurring on a quarterly basis, potentially providing insight to authorities, policymakers, civil society, local communities, and academics.

GloF-DAS was developed in a partnership between NASA Ames Research Center, Cal State Monterey Bay, and Mongabay.com.



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