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Full force: Loggers driving a lorry laden with logs out of the area. The number of trees cut down is quite substantial.



Stopped in his tracks: Activist Manglo being apprehended by one of the men claiming to be a police officer.



Tense situation: An unidentified man (left, circled in red) among the logger group is seen carrying what appears to be a shotgun during the incident at the blockade. Orang asli reported shots were fired during the confrontation.

Over 7,000ha of reserves illegally occupied

KOTA BARU: Some 7,248ha of more than 600,000ha of permanent forest reserves in Kelantan has been illegally occupied since the 1980s, said Kelantan Forestry Director Zahari Ibrahim.

He said the illegally cleared forest land was now used for agriculture, including oil palm, and in some areas, developed into settlements.

However, a committee on the enforcement of permanent forest reserve land under the National Forestry Act, has been formed to address the problem, he told reporters at his office yesterday.

Zahari said reforestation would be carried out in the illegally cleared areas and the state government had approved two companies – Gunung Basor Enterprise and Kundor Tegoh Solution Sdn Bhd – to carry out the job in areas covering 100ha.

In other areas that were illegally cleared and used for farming purposes, he said the department would destroy the crop, as was done on a four hectare area which was planted with oil palm in Gunung Rabung, Kuala Krai, recently. – Bernama

Showdown – orang asli vs men with guns and chainsaws

GUA MUSANG: It was 2.20pm when a group of loggers, accompanied by three men wearing police vests over plainclothes, confronted the orang asli at the blockade.

They claimed to have brought members of media along with them and there were several men toting cameras in the group.

Mustafa Along, secretary of Kelantan Network of Orang Asli Villages (JKOAK), said the loggers demanded that the blockade be

taken down. However, the orang asli stood their ground.

He, along with two other activists, Manglo Tengau and Salim Tengau, found themselves being “arrested” by the men claiming to be policemen.

Mustafa noted that when he offered his hands to be handcuffed, they refused.

“I was taken to a four-wheel-drive vehicle, which I believe belongs to a worker from a logging company,” he said.

All three were later released and the identities of the “police officers” remains unclear.

In videos provided to *The Star* by the orang asli activists, the loggers are seen using chainsaws to cut down the barricade even while the activists were still holding on to it.

According to a statement from the Centre for Orang Asli Concerns (COAC), the chainsaw narrowly missed cutting the leg of one of the orang asli. His slipper was sliced instead.

Once the barricade was dismantled, the loggers drove one of their lorries carrying logs through the path.

Shots were also fired during the incident. It is not known who fired the shots but photos provided to *The Star* show a man with what appears to be a long-barrelled shotgun slung across his back.

The blockade, which was set up on Monday, was part of an initiative by the orang asli to drive loggers out from what they claim is their

ancestral land.

It had been reported that JKOAK had sent notices two weeks ago to the logging companies demanding they cease operations, warning that a blockade would be set up.

On Sept 20, JKOAK had also lodged a formal protest and complaint to the Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC) and had handed a memorandum on the issue to the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam).