

Jabu blames few stubborn Penans for blockade

By Wilson Luke

KUCHING: Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Alfred Jabu has blamed a few "stubborn" Penans for blockading an access road, causing their own community to go without food and other necessities for long periods.

"The problem came up because of four stubborn Penans who instigated the people to support their blockade," said Jabu, who is also the Rural Development Minister, yesterday.

However, he stressed the problem was resolved after the Miri

Resident, Ose Murang, visited and persuaded the community to lift the blockade and allow food supplies to the area.

"Most of the people there opposed the blockade," said Jabu after being briefed on the situation affecting about 14 villages Long Lellang, Ulu Baram in Miri Division.

The Borneo Post highlighted the predicament of the majority of Orang Ulu in the area who could not get their daily supply deliveries through because of the blockade.

A logging track was said to have been once opened by a company in the area but after extracting the timber there, it reportedly neglected

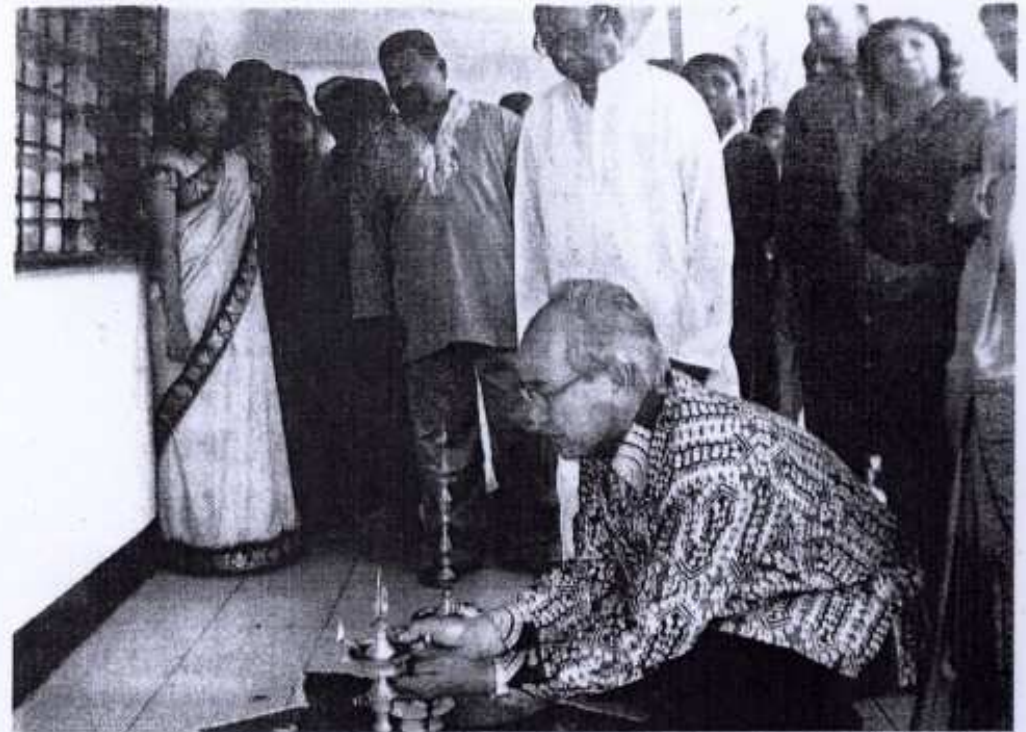
and abandoned the track.

However, another timber company, awarded a concession in the area, tried to build a new access logging track but met with protest from a small group of Penans.

The timber track is to connect 14 villages - with a population of 1,444 people of whom 127 are Kelabits and the rest Penans - to the outer-link road for northern Sarawak.

The protesters are mainly from Long Benalih and their blockage has caused socio-economic inconveniences to the whole Orang Ulu community in the area.

Some of the Penans gave up their nomadic lifestyles to settle around



FESTIVAL OF LIGHT: Jabu joins the Hindu community in Kuching for Deepavali on Sunday by lighting the kuttuvelluku lamp while Sri Maha Mariamman temple president Kapitan T Komaru Samy (standing in white robe) and other guests look on.

Long Lellang area where the Kelabits once farmed. Long Benalih was established on the cultivated land of Maran Lugun, Long Sabai on the

cultivated land of Tukad Rini and Long Keramu on the cultivated land of Ngalap Ulum.

One of the villagers said last week

the road was needed badly in the area for the benefit of the whole community, including the Penans who protested the project.