

Only cleanup works carried out at forest reserve after floods, says Negri MB

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SEREMBAN: No permit was issued to any company to carry out logging activities in the Gunung Telapak Buruk forest reserve, says Datuk Seri Aminuddin Harun.

The Mentri Besar said the state government had however allowed a company to bring out trees that had been uprooted and washed away by floods which had devastated the area and caused the only route to the hilltop covering a distance of 14km to become inaccessible.

This was only allowed after the company agreed to carry out the cleanup work for free.

"I will be asking for trouble if my administration had issued a permit to any company to fell timber in the area, especially in the aftermath of the devastating floods (in December and early this year).

"The floods had caused many landslides in the Gunung Telapak Buruk area causing trees and other debris to be washed down and eventually blocking the only route to the top," he told reporters after chairing the state exco meeting.

Aminuddin said the floods caused some 10km of the 14km stretch to become inaccessible.

He said power supply to the hilltop which among others, houses radio and communication stations was also cut after floods and landslides brought down power lines.

He said to ensure these stations could continue to operate, workers and diesel had to be flown up in a helicopter.

"Officials from the Forestry Department were also present to ensure no trees were felled.

"The company was only allowed to take trees that had been uprooted," he said, adding that the debris had to be cleared as the stretch was completely impassable to vehicles.

However, Aminuddin said a few trees had to be felled at the hilltop to allow the helicopter to land.

"It took the company a week to complete the work.

"This arrangement makes sense as we did not have to fork out money for the cleanup work," he said.

He said Forestry Department officials were also present before lorries transporting the trees were allowed to leave the area.

"The lorries must have proper documents before they are allowed to take the trees away," he said.

He also invited the media to visit the area and see for themselves the work carried out and if trees had been indiscriminately felled.

Aminuddin said although the road was now accessible by four-wheel drives, it would cost some RM200mil to rebuild the slopes, drainage system, road and other infrastructure along the stretch.

"The stretch is still a high-risk area till proper remedial work is carried out," he added.

On a separate matter, Aminuddin said the state-level Hari Raya open house will be held at the MBS Hall here from 11am to 3pm on May 21.

Source: <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2022/05/11/only-cleanup-works-carried-out-at-forest-reserve-after-floods-says-negri-mb>