

'No guidelines' on campsites

We can't act against owner as there are no rules, says Hee

PETALING JAYA: Selangor has no specific guidelines to regulate campsites and the state government will only now work with the Tourism Ministry to draw them up.

One of the items under the proposed guidelines would be to not allow tents to be set up at the foot of a slope.

"There will be a minimum buffer zone, between the slope and the campsite," said state exco man Hee Loy Sian.

The tourism, environment, green technology and Orang Asli affairs committee chairman said the absence of guidelines had caused confusion among the people, with many blaming the state government for the tragedy in Batang Kali.

He said the state could not take action against the land owner because there were no guidelines preventing the setting up of tents on private premises.

"Camping, specifically 'glamping' activity, became famous during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It is a new activity and a booming one too.

"Many land owners, especially those near forested areas are now offering this form of eco-tourism product, and people are willing to pay high prices to spend the night in natural surroundings," he said.

(Glamping is a blend of 'glamorous' and 'camping'.)

Hee said it would soon be compulsory for all campsite operators to get approval from the local authority.



Early warning: Contractors installing a 'Real-Time Monitoring Device' at the Father's Organic Farm landslide site to detect soil movement in the area. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star

"We need to control the camping activity," he said after the Karnival Bumi Hijau closing ceremony in Kampung Bukit Angkat in Kajang.

After the landslide on Friday, it was revealed that the owner of the farm was operating the campsite without a licence.

Hee said there were many camping and glamping sites in the state,

specifically in Hulu Selangor, Gombak and Hulu Langat.

Malaysian Geotechnical Society (MGS) president Lee Peir Tien said proper guidelines and policies for campsite developments are urgently needed due to the rising popularity of such activity in high-risk areas like hill slopes, waterfalls and rivers.

"It is believed that most campsites or farmstays are located on agricultural land, which only have licences to operate agriculture activities," he said.

Lee also said Malaysia could learn from Hong Kong in terms of installing early warning systems at high-risk areas as one of the efforts to mitigate the effects of erosion.

'Govt needs better coordination in tragedies and economy'

By ZAKIAH KOYA
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PETALING JAYA: Cabinet members and deputy ministers need better coordination not only during tragedies but also in economic matters, say political analysts.

Analysts say a more coordinated show by Cabinet members and deputy ministers would have given a better public perception of a unity government working together.

Universiti Sains Malaysia political scientist Dr Azmil Mohd Tayeb said the presence of too many ministers holding media conferences at the site of a tragedy gave the impression that they were campaigning.

"It seemed as if these ministers and their deputies are still in campaigning mode despite being in the post-15th general election and with a government in place.

"There should only be one spokesman on the ground for natural disasters such as this, preferably Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad as the Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Minister.

"Other ministers could have held press conferences at their ministries to announce what they could do to help the victims," he said.

However, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia political analyst Dr Mazlan Ali said the new government should be given time.

He said ministers not coordinating with each other during the aftermath of a tragedy might be due to the fact that it was still trying to figure out how its members should work together.

"Give them about 100 days to a year to get their act together, especially since this is a government made up of former rival parties.

"Ministers need time to be coordinated and this tragedy happened in the midst of the government still taking shape.

"The Prime Minister needs to do more monitoring as well as guide the new ministers.

"The ministers too should fully take part in more official government meetings to see how a government actually works," said Mazlan.

Professor James Chin from the Asia Institute at the University of Tasmania, Australia, said the actions of the ministers after a tragedy should not be a measuring tool of the "unity of a government".

"I do not think it is a big issue when ministers hold their own press conferences at ground zero.

"In getting their act together, the landslide is not a good measure.

"The real measure of these ministers would be in the revival of the economy. You need all the ministries to work together," he said.

One of the unusual features of the present government, said Chin, was that there were four to five ministries with a direct hand in matters related to the national economy.

"If these ministries cannot work together, it would be very difficult to revive the economy.

"The key here is the economy and not a tragedy's aftermath," he said.



Volunteers not allowed in search effort

HULU SELANGOR: Volunteers will not be allowed to help in the search and rescue (SAR) operations at the landslide site at Father's Organic Farm here.

Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Acryl Sani Abdullah Sani said the operations were led by the Fire and Rescue Department and they would determine who could be involved in the SAR.

"Based on our current assessment of the area, the situation is not suitable for members of the public to come and assist.

"The operations are currently limited to the Fire and Rescue Department and they will decide which agencies can join the SAR," he told reporters at the scene.

He said this was because the area was large and it could lead to the situation becoming chaotic.



Weekend outing: People still visiting a camping site in Ulu Bendul near Ipoh despite warnings and the area being temporarily closed to the public. — Bernama

Recreational activities banned at forest reserves

JOHOR BARU: Recreational activities have been temporarily banned in all permanent forest reserves in the state due to the rainy season.

According to a notice posted on the state Forestry Department's Facebook page, the ruling came into effect starting yesterday until further notice.

"All forest eco-parks, hiking trails and four-wheel drive routes in Johor permanent forest reserves are closed to the public until a date to be announced later.

"This closure is a precautionary measure to avoid any unwanted incident or accident during the rainy season," it said.

It warned that those who failed to adhere to the ruling would face action under the Johor National Forestry Act (Adoption) Enactment 1985.

In Ipoh, Bernama reported that the city council had instructed all tourism operators in areas at risk of landslides and water surges to temporarily cease operations.

Ipoh mayor Datuk Rumaizi Baharin said a notice would be sent to all operators tomorrow to ensure the instruction is adhered to.

"We have closed two locations — Kledang Saiong Forest Eco Park, Meru, and Bukit Bangkong, Chemor — since early November.

"We acted following advice from the Minerals and Geoscience Department, which informed us that the soil in the areas is quite soft due to the high rainfall and can pose a risk to visitors," he told reporters after attending the Battle of the Buskers finale here yesterday.

On Friday, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi advised all campsites near hill slopes and rivers to be temporarily vacated following the current uncertain weather conditions.

The landslide at the Father's Organic Farm camping site in Batang Kali, Selangor, on Friday has so far claimed 23 lives.

WEATHER						PRAYER TIMES						
	GEORGE TOWN	K. LUMPUR	JOHOR BARU	KOTA BARU	K. KINABALU	KUCHING	ALOR SETAR	PENANG	K. LUMPUR	JOHOR BARU	KUANTAN	KOTA BARU
AM	Rain	No rain	Rain	Rain	Isolated rain	Isolated rain	Subuh 6:09	Subuh 6:07	Subuh 5:59	Subuh 5:47	Subuh 5:52	Subuh 6:01
							Zohor 1:18	Zohor 1:17	Zohor 1:12	Zohor 1:04	Zohor 1:07	Zohor 1:10
							Asar 4:39	Asar 4:39	Asar 4:35	Asar 4:28	Asar 4:30	Asar 4:31
PM	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms	Rain	Isolated thunderstorms	Isolated thunderstorms	Maghrib 7:09	Maghrib 7:11	Maghrib 7:09	Maghrib 7:04	Maghrib 7:04	Maghrib 7:02
							Isyak 8:24	Isyak 8:26	Isyak 8:24	Isyak 8:18	Isyak 8:19	Isyak 8:13