

Views differ over Lipis forest clearing

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KUANTAN: The clearing of forested areas around Gua Hari Malaysia or Gua Padang Kawad in Merapoh, Lipis, continues to draw opposition from visitors to the eco-tourism site.

A video detailing the destruction to the environment in the area has been shared widely on social media under the #savemerapoh hashtag.

Forestry Department Peninsular Malaysia director-general Datuk Nor Akhrrudin Mahmud, however, said the clearing of the 668.79ha area was approved for agricultural purposes.

“The logging and bulldozing works are to build a road leading to land owned by the Pahang State Agricultural Development Corporation (PKPP). It does not involve any permanent reserved forest areas but privately-owned lots instead,” he said in a statement.

Nor Akhrrudin added that logging on private land did not require the permission of the state authorities but a licence issued by the state Forestry Department director was needed instead to remove the logs.

Pertubuhan Pelindung Khazanah Alam Malaysia (Peka) disputed that, saying that since the approved clearing exceeded 500ha, an environmental impact assessment (EIA) report had to be submitted to the Department of Environment (DOE) first.

“Peka has submitted a query to the DOE but there has not been any response so far. The irony is that logging activities are still ongoing even though an official complaint has been lodged with the DOE.

The logging and bulldozing works are to build a road leading to land owned by the PKPP.

Datuk Nor

Akhrrudin Mahmud



“The DOE director-general and even the Natural Resources and Environment Minister should clear the air over this issue,” said a Peka spokesman when contacted yesterday.

When asked whether the land clearing activities required an EIA report, state Environment Department director Rosli Zul said the matter should be referred to the Forestry Department instead.

The Pahang Forestry Department had previously denied that there was any logging or mining activity in the Merapoh Forest Reserve area.

Its director Datuk Mohd Paiz Kamaruzaman said the PKPP has permission to develop the land and had built a 1.2km trail in the area to transport forest products.