

Royal Belum park badly hit by floods

GRIK: The Royal Belum State Park, the oldest rainforest in the world dating back more than 130 million years, was not spared from the recent floods.

Some 7,600 people have been evacuated from the park, which has been closed since Dec 26.

Tasik Temenggor Tourist Operator Association chairman Farizul Altrash Roslan said the flood had destroyed campsites and chalets.

The affected sites are Sungai Kejar, Sungai Kenarong and Sungai Papan, which had been submerged in flood-water.

Farizul said water from Tasik Temenggor's banks had overflowed into the campsites and chalets and said that it was taking a long time to subside.

He said the Aman Damai Orang Asli village, inside the park grounds and the wooden houses built by the government were badly damaged.

"This is the worst flood by far to hit the state park.

"Areas which were not flood-prone previously were also badly affected this time around.

"It has been nearly two weeks since the floods started and the situation has not improved much," he told the *New Straits Times* here yesterday.

Farizul said the water level at Tasik Temenggor was still at the dangerous level of 250m.

The lake has a capacity of 240m.

"The weather has been fine over the past few days and we hope it remains that way.

"We hope everything will return to normal soon," he said.

On the effect the flood had on the flora and fauna within the state park, Farizul said this was being looked into.

According to studies carried out under the Belum-Temenggor Tropical Forest Integrated Master Plan, there are more than 3,000 species of flora and fauna in the Belum-Temenggor Tropical Forest.

The Belum-Temenggor rainforest complex has been identified as a biodiversity hub for the country.

It is also home to various species of wildlife that are facing extinction, such as tapir, Sumatran rhinoceros, seladang, Asian elephants and Malaysian

tigers.

The Royal Belum State Park was gazetted as a protected area on May 3, 2007, under the Perak State Parks Corporation Enactment 2001.

The park is located in northern Perak covering some 117,500ha.

During a visit to the park last May, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had said serious efforts should be made to get it listed as a United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture (Unesco) World Heritage Site.

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*Tasik Temenggor
Tourist Operator
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