

Tajuk Perkara : BENCANA: GLOVES ARE OFF FOR OFFICERS.

Tajuk Suratkhbar: NEW STRAITS TIMES

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Gloves are off for officers

NO QUARTER: Enforcement agencies told to go after law-breakers without fear or favour

KUALA LUMPUR

ENFORCEMENT officers from various agencies tasked to protect Cameron Highlands, including from being savagely ravaged, have been directed to go after the culprits without fear or favour.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday said the cabinet had directed them to step up their enforcement so that those who had broken the law and con-

tributed to environmental disasters in the highlands could be punished.

"Action must be taken against those found to have broken the law regardless of who they are.

"If there is no enforcement, nobody will respect the law," said Najib in Johor at the opening of the state's Umno convention.

Malaysian Institute of Integrity president Datuk Dr Mohd Tap Salleh said it was unacceptable for law enforcers tasked with pro-

tecting the highlands to cite interference in not enforcing the law.

"I just don't buy the excuse of officers being forced to play ball for fear of repercussions.

"So what if they are transferred out?

"They should be fearing the consequences of their inaction instead," he said adding that government officers always had a way out of interference, and that they could report such matters to not only their superiors but the Public Services Commission.

He was commenting on reports, which often mention that enforcement officers in Cameron Highlands had their hands tied, not only because of interference from powerful individuals in Pahang, but that they were dealing with gangsters and syndicates bent on carrying out illegal agricultural activities that promised huge profits.

The issue of *Surat Kuning* highlighted in yesterday's *New Straits Times* also had Tap flabbergasted.

"Just don't entertain such letters (of recommendation) and never legitimise illegal opening of farms in the highlands, regardless who is asking.

"Areas prohibited from agricultural activities must remain so. So, do the right thing and tell who's asking that they cannot meet his request," he said.

Meanwhile, Cameron Highland District officer Datuk A. Rahman Hamzah, when contacted, said all applications, including those that came in the form of recommendations, would need the approval of the state government.

"Everything would be referred to the technical department before being approved by the state government," he said.

In a related development, Cameron Highlands district police chief Deputy Superintendent Wan Zahari Wan Busu told the NST that investigators in the district were probing into six cases related to illegal land-clearing, under two sections of the Penal Code.

"One case is being investigated under Section 506 of the Penal Code for criminal intimidation and five more are under Section 186 for obstructing a public servant in the discharge of his duties.

"There have been arrests and we are investigating these cases."