

‘Unknown’ project putting Bukit Cerakah forest reserve at risk, says group

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Environmentalists and residents question development work in environmentally sensitive area in Shah Alam.

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Rocks and uprooted trees strewn along a hiking trail.

SHAH ALAM: Environmental groups and residents of Bukit Bayu here are urging the authorities to save the last remaining lowland forest in Shah Alam by stopping development work in the forested areas bordering the Bukit Cerakah forest reserve.

Malaysian Nature Society executive director S Shanmugaraj questioned how development was allowed in the area without a comprehensive environment management plan.

“The area should be kept untouched as it is environmentally sensitive.

“Any development there will have far-reaching consequences to the surrounding environment and the people living in the area,” he said at a news conference.

Shanmugaraj said a social impact study must be conducted together with an economic valuation of the ecosystem.

The study could better assess the benefits and loss of such a project, which would help decision-making,” he added.

Global Environment Centre director Faizal Parish, who is an international wetlands expert, said an environmentally sensitive area needed to be conserved and gazetted as a permanent forest reserve for the benefit of future generations.

He said the area is part of one of the few remaining lowland forests on mineral soil in Selangor, with significant biodiversity.



Representatives of environmental groups and Bukit Bayu residents want development work in the forested area stopped. They are seen here with Kota Anggerik assemblyman Najwan Halimi (fourth from left).

“We must target the future of human beings in this area and encourage collaboration across the boundaries if we want to conserve the remaining biodiversity of the Bukit Cerakah forest,” he said.

Bukit Bayu residents association chairman K M Gobindran asked why the residents were not notified regarding the development project.

No signboard on the project was put up at the site, he added.

He said the residents were also concerned the jungle track used for hiking would be destroyed as a result of the development.

Gobindran urged the relevant authorities to disclose the ownership of the land and what conditions were stated for its use.

“Has the Land Office given its approval to develop the land? If permission has been issued, is an environmental impact assessment required since the area borders a forest reserve?”

He said the fragmentation of the forest will not only reduce the ability of wildlife to survive but further expose them to threat of poaching because of the easier access and close proximity to human habitation.

“The existing forest plays an important recreational role besides its aesthetic value,” he said.

Another resident, Nazri Ilias, 46, said residents were alarmed by explosions last week.

He said when he went with his neighbours to check, they found some hiking trails had been damaged by the blasts.

Nazri said he did not know who the developer is and the purpose of the development in the area.

“I have checked with MBSA (Shah Alam City Council) but they asked me to check with the forestry department, where I received the same answer. It goes back and forth, and we are still unsure of what is happening.”

Kota Anggerik assemblyman Najwan Halimi, who also attended the news conference, said that he will bring the matter up with the state government and proposed for the area to be gazetted as a forest reserve.

He said it was unclear whether permission had been granted for the development by the relevant authorities.

“I will do my best to bring up this matter and find out whether there is illegal logging at Bukit Cerakah forest reserve.

“It is a water catchment area and we should secure the place as it is.”