

Shah Alam residents urge authorities to investigate land-clearing activities

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SHAH ALAM: The Bukit Bayu Homeowners and Residents Association in Section U10 here has urged the authorities to investigate the activities of a development company which they claim have cleared the only forest lowland area in Shah Alam located nearby.

Its representative, Datuk Fahriz Zaini, 40, said if unchecked, the land clearing activities would destroy the natural heritage and disrupt the wildlife eco-system in the area, which is part of the Bukit Cerakah forest reserve (National Botanical Park).

He said the local residents were also concerned that the land clearing works had led to the local wildlife which had lost their habitat to enter their homes, which were only a few hundred metres from the forest.

"We estimate that the land clearing activities have so far been over 546 hectares. We first realised it in early Ramadan and there are now activities including explosives used to break up rocks heard since last Monday.

"There are no signboards for development at the location. Is the land being legitimately cleared to build houses or to obtain wood?" he said to reporters, here today.

Fahriz added the explosions could also led to problems related to soil erosion in the future as they were carried out barely 100 metres from the residents' homes.

The residents have also lodged a police report on the matter last Monday and submitted complaints with the Shah Alam City Council (MBSA) as well as Selangor Forestry Department on the same day.

The residents' plight has also caught the attention of local environmental groups like the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS), the Global Environment Centre (GEC) and Treat Every Environment Special (TEES).

MNS executive director I. S. Shanmugaraj said the lowland forest, which is connected to the National Botanical Park, should be protected from any land-clearing and development activities as it is rich in flora and fauna, especially animals which are in danger of extinction.

"This is the only lowland forest area in Shah Alam and it is also a rain catchment area, a habitat for wild animals such as tapir, as well as a forest rich in natural resources and a people's recreation area. The land clearing should be immediately stopped and the forest protected," he said.

He said the time has come for the state government to take the matter seriously and to gazette the Bukit Bayu lowland forest as a protected area.

Kota Anggerik state assemblyman Mohd Najwan Halimi, who was also present at the press conference, also gave his assurance that the land clearing activities would be monitored besides proposing to the state government that the forest area be gazetted as permanent forest reserve.

— *Bernama*