

Residents call for freeze on Bukit Cerakah development

By Jerry Choong

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SHAH ALAM — Residents of Bukit Bayu want a moratorium on development work at the nearby Bukit Cerakah Forest Reserve, which they say poses an ecological and land erosion threat.

Resident Nazri Ilyas said the issue has been going on for some time, and culminated on Monday when loud explosions could be heard from the forest.

“At first I thought it was someone setting off fireworks. Then I saw dusky leaf monkeys running from branch to branch, and I realised something was amiss,” he said during a press conference yesterday.

Nazri and several other residents headed to the forest towards a private road originally meant for public’s use for hiking. There they spotted a barrier had been erected.

“Shortly after, two vehicles also arrived. Three men got down and identified themselves as security guards for a ‘contractor’, and ordered us to leave the area,” he said.

As there was no signboard announcing any sort of project, Nazri said he and the other residents refused to leave.

“Fortunately, police also arrived at the site and advised us to file a report on the same day, which we did,” he said.

Fellow resident Datuk Fahri Zahni Aminuddin said following this, he and several other residents went to the Petaling District Land Office to see the titles for the forest.

“However, we were told there are no titles yet. So we had to seek out the Shah Alam City Council (MBSA) but we were told the matter fell under the Forestry Department.

“When approached, the Forestry Department informed us this should be handled by MBSA. So currently we are at a loss,” he said.



Erosion and land clearing at Bukit Cerakah have raised questions if development is being carried out in the area. Inset: (From right) MNS executive director I.S. Shanmugaraj, Najwan, Nazri and Nagarajan. — Pictures by Yusof Mat Isa

Fahri added the area is Shah Alam’s last remaining lowland forest which is home to a number of animal species, some endangered.

“Tapirs and clouded leopards inhabit the forest, and we fear whatever development there will increase wildlife-human conflict,” he said, adding the residents are still trying to find out what kind of development is taking place.

The residents’ efforts are supported by several environmental groups, including the Global Environment Centre (GEC), Treat Every Environment Special, and the Malaysian Nature Society.

GEC forest and coastal programme coordinator R. Nagarajan said anything that disturbed the environmentally sensitive reserve could have dire consequences later.

“Cutting down trees, some of which are



over a century old, leads to land erosion, which in turn can cause loss of life and natural features,” he said, citing the 1993 Highland Towers tragedy as an example.

“Not to mention the high costs that the authorities have to spend on rectifying any arising issues. Therefore, we ask them to extend the moratorium which has been

in place since 2005,” he said.

Bukit Anggerik assemblyman Najwan Halimi also supported the residents’ efforts to protect the reserve.

“I will propose to the state government to gazette the land. Not only is it ecologically important, it is also a vital rain catchment area,” he said.