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Hulu Klang developer to plant 12,000 trees

Esther Tan; Sajahan Waheed

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Following strong condemnation about indiscriminate hill cutting and tree felling at the Uday Perdana housing project in Hulu Klang, the developer today pledged to plant some 12,000 trees in the area in six months.

Projek Ikatan Rapi Sdn Bhd will also propose to give the Selangor State Government a bank guarantee of RM5 million which will be forfeited if the developer failed to meet the target.

Larut Consolidated Bhd's assistant general manager (Project) Ting Jian Guo said the planting of trees was part of the three remedial measures Projek Ikatan Rapi would propose to the State Government, the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council and the relevant authorities soon.

The other two are re-turfing of slopes, enlarging and maintaining silt traps at the project site.

(Projek Ikatan Rapi is owned by Capital Advance Consolidated Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Larut Consolidated).

The proposal and plan for the tree-planting will be submitted to the local authority and State Government in two to three days.

Ting said the planting of trees was part of the developer's original plan but it was supposed to be carried out only after each phase of the construction work had been completed.

"After all these (referring to recent news report about tree felling and the stop-work order issued by the local authority), we have decided to begin planting the trees immediately.

"Of course, the State Government has to give us the green light," he said.

About 60 per cent of the area will be planted with trees under the proposal.

Projek Ikatan Rapi plans to plant some 16 types of fruit trees including Sukun and Cempedak; and 15 types of forest trees including Merawan Siput Jantan, Africa Tulip and Ketapang.

It has started sourcing for the trees from a nursery in Tanjung Malim and in Johor.

"It is not an easy task to plant the 12,000 trees because it means we have to plant 2,000 trees in a month.

"It has also been in our original plan to do landscaping after the project is completed," said Ting.

He said the trees were expected to cost about RM3 million while turfing via the use of hydro-seeding would take up about RM2 million.

Asked why the developer had carried out tree felling in the area, Ting said the area was originally covered mainly with open scrub and bamboo forest and a few rubber and durian trees.

According to a copy of the Environmental Impact Assessment report prepared by an environmental consultant, secondary invasive open scrub covered a large portion of the project site.

On Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding's recent statement that the developer had not taken mitigative measures on slopes cut, Ting said it had been carrying out turfing on the slopes.

"We had already been doing turfing on slopes and the grass had not been growing fast enough. Therefore, we need to re-turf the area," he said.

The developer was called to brief the State Exco on the project yesterday.

Ting said Projek Ikatan Rapi would do anything it can to rectify the situation but he refused to comment further on statements made by the Government on the project.

Last Wednesday, the MPAJ had issued the developer with a stop-work order which would only be lifted when it was satisfied that remedial works had been carried out at the site.

This followed a Cabinet directive to the Housing and Local Government Ministry to investigate massive land clearing works in Selangor.

The directive was issued after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad spotted the clearing works from a helicopter last week.

On Monday, MPAJ president Abdul Karim Munisar said it was considering charging the developer under the Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974 for contravening rulings on earthworks.

The next day, Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said Projek Ikatan Rapi had failed to comply with four EIA conditions, including carrying out construction work on slopes more than 20 degrees in gradient; failure to carry out mitigative and stabilisation works on slopes; failure to maintain its silt trap; and failure to submit plans before carrying out earthworks.

The Department of Environment is planning to take the developer to court.

In another development, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh said his ministry will discuss with town planners, architects and local authorities on correct procedures to carry out hillside development projects and still reduce tree felling.

He said the ministry was instructed by the Cabinet to carry out national level discussions.

The Town and Country Planning Department will call for the meeting, he told reporters after opening the 1997 Beijing International Economic and Technical Co-operation Symposium.

Ting said through such discussions, the ministry hoped that all parties involved in development projects would not approve projects that involves major tree felling.

"This matter should be studied right from the planning stages," he said. "But this does not mean that project developers cannot cut down the trees. What we want to stress is there should not be indiscriminate felling of trees."

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