

28/03/1997

Rainforest turns `desert' in Hulu Klang

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WITH the trees felled and the hills levelled, this "desert" in Hulu Klang which used to be a rainforest will soon be a concrete jungle, like the one in the background.

It is being cleared for the Ukay Perdana housing project.

Checks conducted by the New Straits Times yesterday morning revealed that most of the foliage has disappeared, exposing the steep barren slopes to the elements of nature.

Hills within the area have also been cut into terraces and cleared right up to the boundary of the Ampang Permanent Forest Reserve.

At one spot, the cleared land has cut off the natural course of rainwater running off from within the forest reserve, causing a muddy pond to form just inside its boundary.

On Wednesday, Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib said initial investigations had shown that the piece of land, earmarked for mixed development, was being developed by Projek Ikatan Rapi Sdn Bhd.

He said the State Government, through the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council, had issued a stop-work order to the developer.

This followed the Cabinet's instruction to the Housing and Local Government Ministry to investigate a case of land clearing in Selangor.

The instruction from the Cabinet came after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad spotted extensive land clearing in Selangor from a helicopter last week while on his way back from Taman Negara.

Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh said on Wednesday that the Cabinet was concerned that there were still reports of developers flouting regulations on the felling of trees and levelling hills in the name of development.

When contacted yesterday, Projek Ikatan Rapi said it would undertake to carry out immediate remedial steps to comply with rules and regulations so as to be allowed to resume work.

Its assistant general manager, Ting Jian Guo, said work on the site was suspended immediately after the company received the order from the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council on Wednesday.

"The council had requested an explanation on remedial steps to be taken by us so that the order could be lifted.

"We have already prepared a report to be forwarded to the council," he said.

Jian Guo said the report detailed the latest development of earthworks on site.

He said the company would undertake work to deepen existing silt traps and maintain the drainage at the site to prevent further siltation.

"We will also replace every single tree felled upon completion of earthworks at the site to maintain the greenery," he said.

When asked why there was such widespread felling of trees and levelling of hills, Jian Guo said work done was in compliance with plans approved by the relevant authorities.

"In order for earthworks to be carried out, a certain amount of levelling of steep hills and felling of trees has to occur.

"Cutting and levelling of land, especially hillslopes, followed conditions laid out in the earthwork plans which were approved by the council last July," he added.

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