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Spare the hills from development

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RECENT news reports on the extensive felling of trees at the hills of Ampang and Hulu Klang, both in Selangor, were quite disturbing.

I was shocked that it took Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to say something about the land clearing before we saw action by the authorities. The clearing of the land has been going on for some time.

I find it amusing that literally everyone ended up pointing fingers at each other but to date, none has owned up for this disastrous situation.

I am working with a developer in Kuala Lumpur. My wife and I bought a house in Taman TAR, Ampang, early last year.

We decided on the purchase as it was located adjacent to, what we were made to understand at that point in time, a green lung.

I prided myself on the fact that I was able to live in an area where the quality of life was not sacrificed for development demands and the lush green surroundings served as a healthy and conducive environment for family living. I was wrong.

Towards the middle of last year, we began to see patches of greenery disappearing and the environment turning dusty.

The once scenic and picturesque hills were stripped of their greenery, including trees which must have been more than 100 years old.

Now, what was once a beautiful sight amid bustling city life has disappeared, probably for good.

I was made to understand that most of the hilly areas around Ampang and Hulu Klang have been designated as green lungs and that there should not be any development there.

The Prime Minister even said once that there should not be any more development on hills and slopes to avoid another Highland Towers-type disaster.

It was also on this basis that we moved to Taman TAR.

However, much to my dismay, the so-called green lungs are slowly being destroyed by profit-hungry developers.

I blame the local authorities for this terrible and irredeemable loss.

The newspapers have highlighted the clearing of hills in Hulu Klang. How can such a huge piece of land be cleared without the authorities knowing about it?

Is the municipal council so badly managed that its enforcement officers ignored such wrongdoings?

This is not something minor and I am not making a mountain out of a molehill, as some might think.

It is just that I see the development on hills and slopes gradually getting out of hand.

Very soon the beautiful sights which we have and for which we are known for will disappear.

I am not against development. As a matter of fact, I am a developer myself.

I have always believed that there should be a balance between development and conservation, an issue which is seldom addressed here in Malaysia.

We can develop the whole country, but why can't we leave the hills and slopes alone?

There are many other areas which we can develop.

Personally, I think we should leave something behind for future

generations to enjoy. A concrete jungle is definitely not what I would like to be remembered by.

The success of a particular development must not be evaluated in monetary terms alone.

The impact on the social side should also be considered. The quality of life must be given priority when developing an area.

Having strict laws are not enough. The enforcers must take heed and carry out their work conscientiously.

At the moment, this huge tract of land behind Taman TAR is being cleared. I am only assuming that the developers have the approval of the council and the Department of Environment.

If this is so, then regretfully, I must abide by the fact that Taman TAR will soon change.

But if this is not the case, then we have yet another case similar to the one which was highlighted by our Prime Minister.

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