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Difficulties in remedying environmental damage

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Almost a year has passed since Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad highlighted a barren hill in Hulu Kelang which had been cleared of its forest cover and flattened for the Ukay Perdana housing project.

However, the site still remains barren although the developer pledged to plant 12,000 trees in an effort to recultivate the area and minimise any adverse environmental impact on its project.

The effort does not seem to have achieved the desired objective.

In December, it planted an initial 1,500 trees within its project site which is near Bukit Antarabangsa and also carried out "hydroseeding" to turf the steep slopes as a remedial measure.

The developer also pledged to plant the remaining trees in due course. Once fully-grown, the trees were supposed to be replanted in strategic locations within the residential housing project.

A survey of the 1,500 planted saplings by New Straits Times photographer Imran Mahzan at the barren site revealed that they had not grown very much.

Besides being stunted in growth, some of the trees also seemed to be withering in the scorching heat.

This is probably due to unsuitable soil conditions coupled with the hot weather and prolonged drought as a result of low rainfall in the Hulu Kelang and Ampang catchment areas.

The rocky surface and steep slopes at the 82.8 hectare-site has also made it difficult to plant the saplings and carry out "hydroseeding" to turf the steep slopes.

This goes to show the difficulties faced by developers in rehabilitating barren sites after having caused undue environmental damage by clearing forest areas and cutting hills without first thinking of the dire consequences of their actions.

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