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Residents want to keep their field of dreams

Glen Peters

THE Jalan Ipoh soccer field - a nursery that harnessed the skills of a number of former State and national soccer players - will make way for a golf driving range unless something is done.

With the standard of local soccer deteriorating by the day, and the call raised by Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad to address the issue, the last thing we need is another public field being taken away for commercial reasons.

Yesterday, close to 100 residents and players who utilise the field, staged a protest to stop the proposed conversion of the field under the Sentul Raya project.

"This field is used by the residents, the youths and senior citizens as a means to play games, be it soccer or tai-chi. It will deprive these folks from having a public field to play on," said Flames Football Club secretary Thomas Samuel in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Samuel, a former Selangor State player, was one of the players who grew up playing on the field.

Among other notable soccer players who played on the field during their younger years are Manuel George (Selangor), Imran Ahmad (Kuala Lumpur) and M. Chinakaruppan (national team).

National athletes such as S. Subramaniam and Victor Martin also utilised the field during their formative years.

"Schools that utilise the field for sports activities are the Methodist Boys School (Sentul), La Salle Sentul, SRJK (T) Thambosamy, SMK (C) Chong Hwa, Methodist High School and SRJK Thandayuthabani."

Flames FC spokesman P. Kamalanathan said the field has also played a role in encouraging youths around the Sentul and Jalan Ipoh areas to take up sports instead of getting involved in gansterism, drug abuse and other unhealthy activities.

"Flames Football Club spends around RM1,000 maintaining the field each month, funds received from well-wishers. We will be starting a signature campaign soon," said Kamalanathan.