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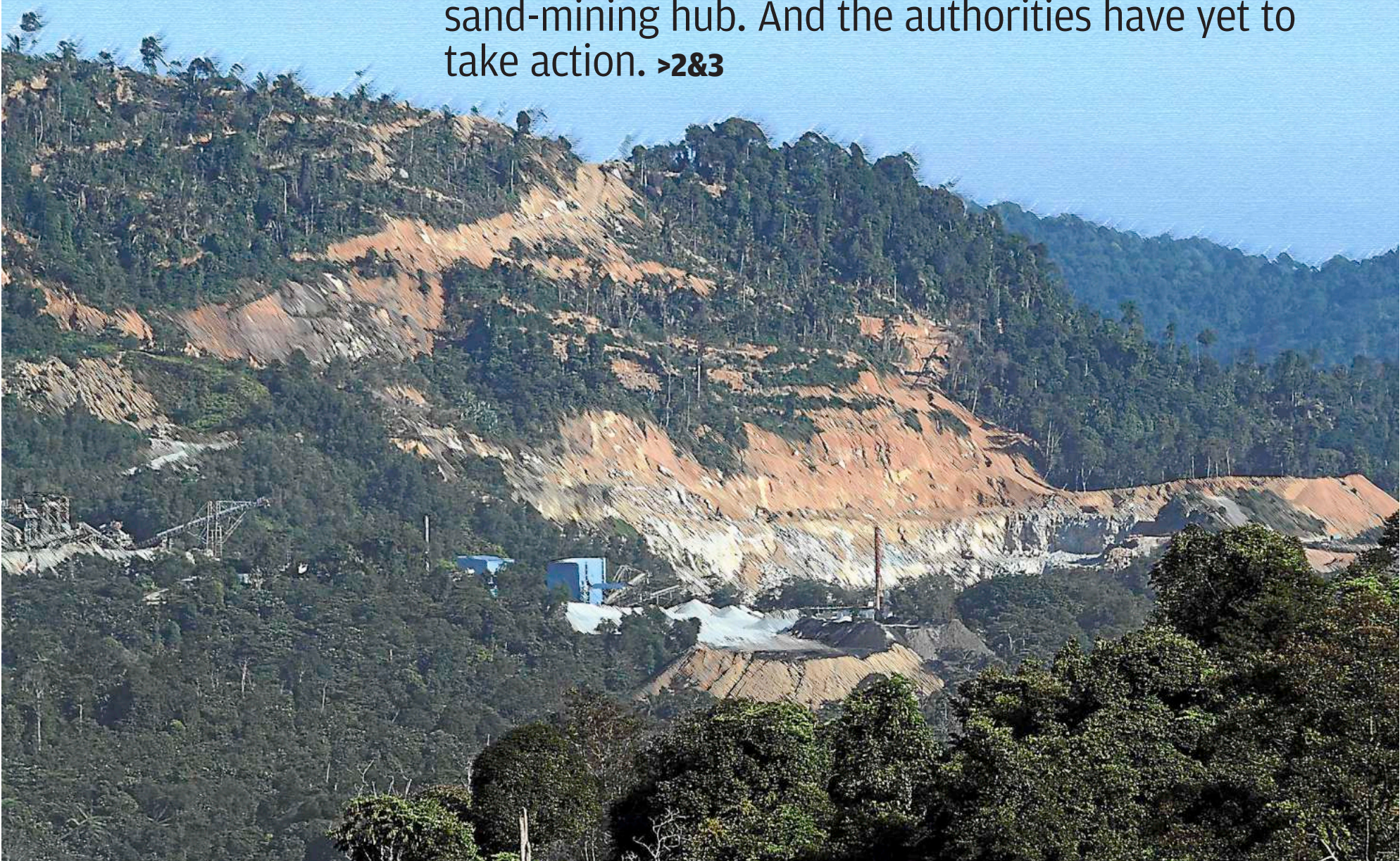
Sharks alive at Beach Club >20



Conditions going

downhill

The once pristine Bukit Enggang in Hulu Langat is now a dumping ground as well as a logging and sand-mining hub. And the authorities have yet to take action. >2&3



Nature ripped

A view of the deforestation happening on the slopes of Bukit Enggang. – By LOW BOON TAT / THE STAR

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By YIP YOKE TENG
teng@thestar.com.my
Photos by LOW BOON TAT
and AZHAR MAHFOF

IT WAS once a forest reserve but was divided into hundreds of bungalow lots and given to civil servants. Sixteen years on, the picture of bungalows scattered on the hill has not materialised, instead Bukit Enggang has become a dumping ground.

The secluded hill straddling Hulu Langat, besides being a massive dump site, is also the area for activities such as logging and sand mining.

Bukit Enggang is out-of-bounds to "unauthorised vehicles". The entry point is blocked with a boom gate and is closely guarded throughout the day.

Two 'No Entry' signs with rifles drawn on them serve as stern warning to outsiders but lorries laden with sand and rubbish are often spotted entering and exiting the area.

Joggers are the only outsiders allowed to enter in the morning and they are mostly from the nearby Bandar Sungai Long and Bandar Mahkota Cheras. They like to walk on the steep roads for a good workout and enjoy a good view of Hulu Langat.

However, the walk is actually a sorry experience as the roads are in bad shape, with potholes and sinking on both sides of the tarred road. In some locations, the piles of rubbish stretch as far as the eye can see.

What used to be bungalow plots given to the civil servants are all covered in thick undergrowth. Only one house can be found here and it is located right next to the entry point.



Dumping ground: Bukit Enggang, turned from a forest reserve into a government bungalow cluster that did not materialise, has now been reduced to a 'popular' dump site.

The dumping hill

Area earmarked for bungalow houses on Bukit Enggang now a sorry sight

There are electricity poles along the roads but the cables are all stolen. Drains are badly broken due to soil erosion and a building that looks like a water pumphouse has been abandoned.

One can see a pond at one point but the location used to be a road,

now filled up with stagnant water and dotted with litter and mosquito larvae.

About an hour's walk from the entry point, a huge sand mining site can be spotted in a secluded area, with no sign indicating they are licensed to carry out the activities.

Worrying state

StarMetro attempted to contact the landowners of Bukit Enggang through a Facebook page put up to gather them. Calls to the two telephone numbers listed went unanswered and the page was later removed.

While no one lives inside Bukit Enggang currently, its ravaged con-

> SEE NEXT PAGE



Laid bare: Bare patches like this are a common sight inside Bukit Enggang, Hulu Langat.

Rampant sand mining and logging activities

> FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

dition is of concern to about 3,000 villagers of Sungai Serai, located at the foot of the hill.

Sungai Serai village head, Zainuddin Mohamad Tasar, said villagers had noticed that the once thick forest near the top of the hill had become sparse.

"We only suspected that the logging has been going on for months when we finally noticed the bare patches and truck trails in the area.

"It dawned on us then that there were lorries laden with logs and sand plying our road more frequently. They are polluting the air and damaging the roads," he said.

He said the area where trees were felled was supposed to be a buffer zone between Bukit Enggang and Sungai Serai.

"I have made complaints to the authority but there has been no response so far. The villagers are worried especially since our village, stretching over 3km, has been hit by floods at least once every year," he said.

Dusun Tua assemblyman Razaly Hassan said following the complaints, he had written to the Land Office to find out the status of the plots of land but that he was still waiting for a reply.

"We want to know if the plots belong to the Government, private owners or companies. Also, we are wondering if the operators have a permit and if they do, do they abide by the requirements?" he said.

The bigger picture

Razaly also highlighted that the Hulu Langat area was prone to flooding.

In light of the large-scale quarrying and development at the Langat hills, he questioned monitoring and enforcement measures put in place to ensure that the environment was not severely affected and residents' safety protected.

He said that Dusun Tua state constituency's population had also doubled, compared to 10 years ago.

Also, Hulu Langat, endowed with scenic locations such as Sungai Congkak, Sungai Gabai, Sungai

Chronology of events in Bukit Enggang, Hulu Langat

Between 1996 and 1997: The Selangor government divided Bukit Enggang, a former forest reserve in Hulu Langat, into 600 plots of 0.4ha each and handed them over to civil servants from the police, army and Anti-Corruption Agency.

Sept 2002: A newspaper's visit to the hill showed that plots of land were established and numbered, tarred roads and electric poles built to prepare the area for residential use.

May 2003: Gombak district officer Ramli Mahmud cited the case of Bukit Enggang in his defence of the act to give land to government officers an issue raised by the Opposition in light of plots in Dengkil dan Kampung Labu Lanjut given to several state exco members.

June 2004: Landowners of Bukit Enggang highlighted their predicament to a local daily that they could not build any property due to damaged roads and infrastructure. One of them named Basil Yusof Mohamed Yusof said he bought the land from an ex ACA officer for RM180,000. The landowners claimed that they had paid about RM65,000 to the District Land Office to build the infrastructure.

It was learned through them that SAP Air Hitam Properties Sdn Bhd (a company under Kumpulan Hartanah Selangor Berhad) was the company engaged by the District Land Office to build the infrastructure, and the job was assigned to Pidalmarine Engineering Sdn Bhd.

April 2009: An illegal sand mining site was uncovered inside Bukit Enggang.

Feb 2010: Six people, including an assistant director of the Hulu Langat District and Land Office and a police inspector, were charged in the Sessions Court in relation to a sand smuggling operation which led to 38 people being arrested by the Malaysian Anti Corruption Commission the month before.

Dec 2010: A Malay daily reported that the Muslim burial reserve measuring 72ha in Bukit Enggang was badly damaged by sand mining. The damage was worrying even though a state exco member later clarified that the plots were privately owned.

March 2011: Selangor Forestry Department exposed an illegal logging site in Bukit Enggang. The department commented that the area was a "hot spot" rich in forestry products but had been damaged by unscrupulous money makers that gave no regards to enforcement and environment.

May 2011: Two MPKJ councillors discovered sand mining activities in Bukit Enggang following a tip-off.

Oct 2011: A lorry driver and a housewife were sentenced to a year's jail and fined RM100,000 each for soliciting and receiving a RM10,000 bribe from a sand operator. The money was said to be paid to the Hulu Langat Land Office and Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission enforcement officers for them to close an eye on illegal sand mining in Bukit Enggang.

Oct 2013: The two were acquitted of the bribery charges.

©The Star Graphics

Pangsun and Sungai Tekala, has been earmarked by the state government for tourism-related developments.

Plans are under way to upgrade the area, among them building alternative roads to ease traffic congestion along Jalan Hulu Langat.

Razaly said he wants to propose

highlighting agricultural activities in Hulu Langat as an attraction to lure tourists.

But at the rate the trees are being cut and the hills laid bare, both legally and illegally, one cannot help but question the viability of such plans.



Bleak outlook: An abandoned utility building inside Bukit Enggang.



Cut off: The cables for the electricity poles erected all over Bukit Enggang have all been stolen.



Digging away: The natural resources inside Bukit Enggang are being removed on a constant basis, the damage of such act on the environment causes concern.



Bad state: Bukit Enggang is frequented by cyclists to get a good workout on the steep roads and to catch a good aerial view of Hulu Langat, but the state inside the area is deplorable.



Blast from the past

Malacca's Heeren Street, now known as Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock, is home to ornately decorated heritage buildings. >12



Ideas for the last rites

The recent funeral expo has shown that companies are coming up with new approaches to carry out funeral services. >22&23



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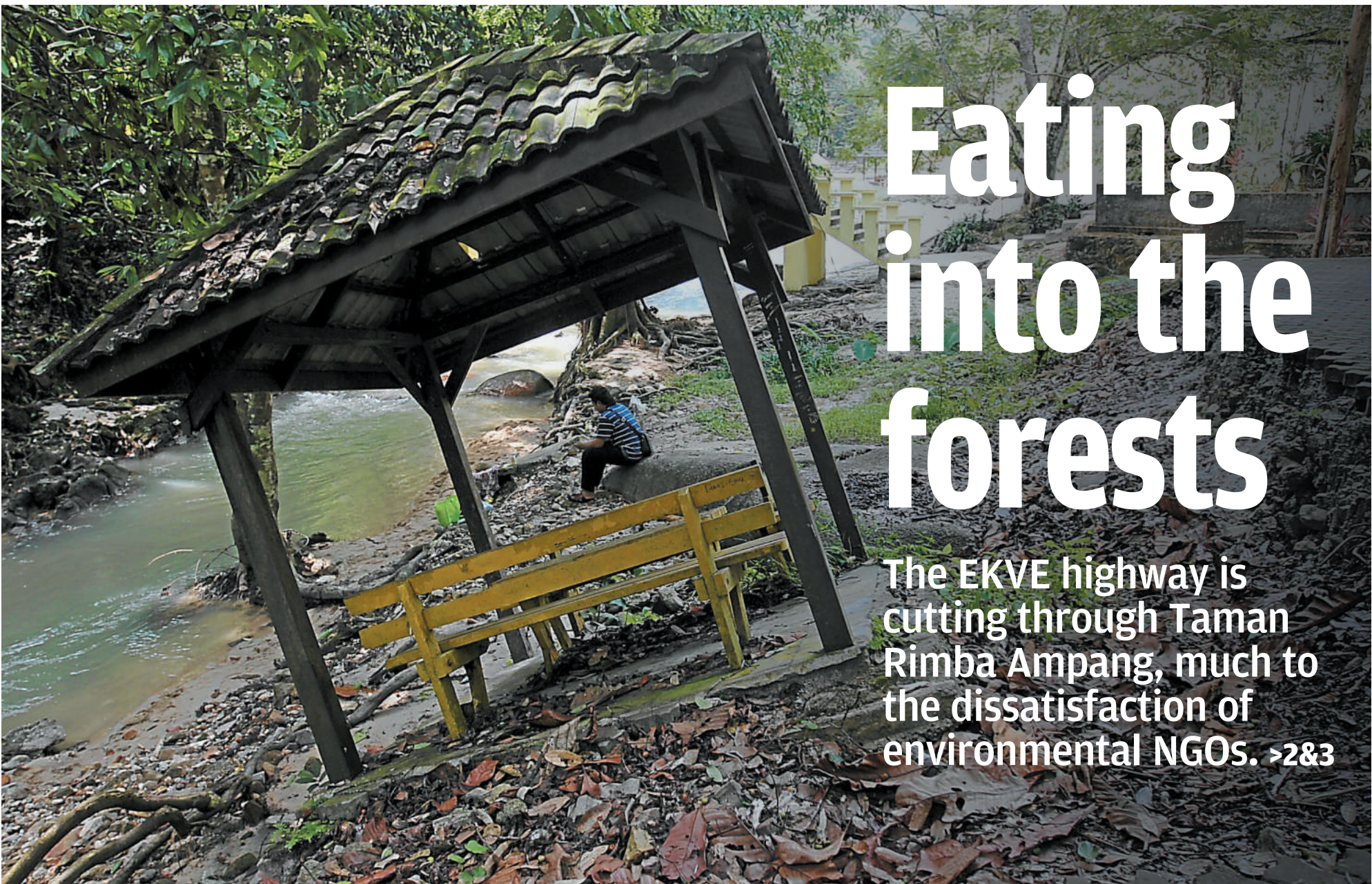
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Daphne Iking on honesty among friends >10



Eating into the forests

The EKVE highway is cutting through Taman Rimba Ampang, much to the dissatisfaction of environmental NGOs. >2&3

Grim reminder

A gazebo in Taman Rimba Ampang threatens to collapse into the river due to soil movement caused by serious flooding. — By SAM THAM / The Star

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Nature threatened: Taman Rimba Ampang is the place city folk go for a cool dip in the river and enjoy nature, hence NGOs are worried about the effects of the East Klang Valley Expressway construction.

Wrath of environmentalists

NGOs remain unconvinced with assessment report of proposed EKVE

By YIP YOKE TENG
teng@thestar.com.my
Photos by SAM THAM

A VISIT to the recently reopened Taman Rimba Ampang gives a good idea of the possible environmental impact the proposed East Klang Valley Expressway (EKVE), the final route of the Kuala Lumpur Outer Ring Road (KLORR), may have. The park was closed for about a year for a major clean-up and to repair amenities damaged by serious flooding in March last year, which also inundated two villages nearby.

Broken roads and paved paths, rotting trunks lying across the river in which children play and a gazebo is sloping down dramatically due to soil movement are all too common. This extensive damage happened when the trees on the hills around Sungai Ampang were still intact. As such, the prospect of a highway being built right through these hills was undeniably worrying. Environmental groups are not convinced by the Detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (DEIA) done by UKM Pakarunding Sdn Bhd, which was commissioned by EKVE

Sdn Bhd, the project proponent. The company is a subsidiary of Ahmad Zaki Resources Bhd which signed the RM1.55bil concession agreement with the Works Ministry for the design, construction, completion, operation, management and maintenance of the stretch. It was reported that the concession period is 50 years. Environmental groups were surprised that the Environment Department (DoE) in Putrajaya approved the said DEIA about a month ago. They felt that the approval was "done irregularly" in a meeting in

which NGOs, including the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS), which was on the panel, were not invited. Environmentalist Lim Teck Wyn said a petition with more than 3,000 signatures of residents and park visitors had been submitted during the DEIA's public viewing period but it was still approved. "The primary concern here is that the highway will cut through the Selangor State Park gazetted in 2005 in conjunction with its Developed State status. The state park was classified as

> SEE NEXT PAGE

Third-time lucky EKVE receives DoE approval

THE Environment Department (DoE) in Putrajaya had earlier rejected the Detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (DEIA) submitted by project proponent EKVE Sdn Bhd on two occasions - Feb 22 and June 26, 2012 - before finally giving the approval on April 25. Director-general Datuk Halimah Hassan said the department only gave its approval after it was satisfied with the additional assessment and information submitted, which met the requirements of Section 34A(2) of the Environmental Quality Act 1974. She said the approval came with 62 conditions. "The DEIA was approved for the development of this expressway project limited from CH0.000

up CH24000.000, which is 24.16km from the Sungai Long Interchange to the Ukay Perdana Interchange. The earlier proposed stretch from Ukay Perdana Interchange to International Islamic University Malaysia (UIAM) was not approved. "Feedback from the public and all relevant parties has been addressed in the additional assessment done by the DEIA consultants and the project proponent," said Halimah. She added that the DEIA was also processed in accordance with procedures set by DOE. Halimah explained that the company was required to take stringent measures to control pollution, sediment and erosion. It needed to submit the Environmental Management Plan

(EMP), Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP) and a Wildlife Management Plan, among others. A third-party environmental audit was also required during the construction and operation phase. She said the company also needed to install Pollution Removal System (PRS) at two locations near the Ampang and Sungai Langat water intake points, adding that the proposed Ampang Interchange had been relocated downstream of the Ampang Water Intake point to protect the water quality of Sungai Ampang. "Should the proposed project be implemented, the DOE will be enforcing the DEIA approval conditions and will be monitoring its construction closely," she said.

Too much water to handle
Flood prevention system to be re-evaluated, says Muhyiddin
PETALING JAYA: The flood prevention system for the Klang Valley...
Victims recall brush with wrath of nature
PETALING JAYA: Forty-five-year-old...
Flashback: A report of the Ampang flood in March last year that caused Taman Rimba Ampang to be closed for almost a year for clean-up and repair.



Wrath of nature: Part of the walkway in Taman Rimba Ampang damaged by previous flooding.

NGOs propose to realign highway

> FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Rank 1 Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) under the National Physical Plan and accorded the highest status of protection.

"If this is the kind of thing we do to a heritage site, we do not deserve developed state status," said Lim.

To make their voices heard, MNS, WWF-Malaysia, Treat Every Environment Special (TrEES) and Save Our Rivers (SOS) have formed the Coalition for Taman Warisan Negeri Selangor recently. Lim is its adviser.

The Ampang Forest Reserve that falls within the state park would be affected, Lim pointed out.

He added that the DEIA had left out the forest reserve's boundaries, which would show the impact more clearly.

"Part of the highway is right next to Sungai Ampang in the upstream. This is also the Ampang water

catchment area and the source of Sungai Klang, which the River of Life project is striving to rehabilitate. What's the point of cleaning Sungai Klang when its source is not protected?" said Lim.

He pointed out that the river was crystal clear some 10 years ago.

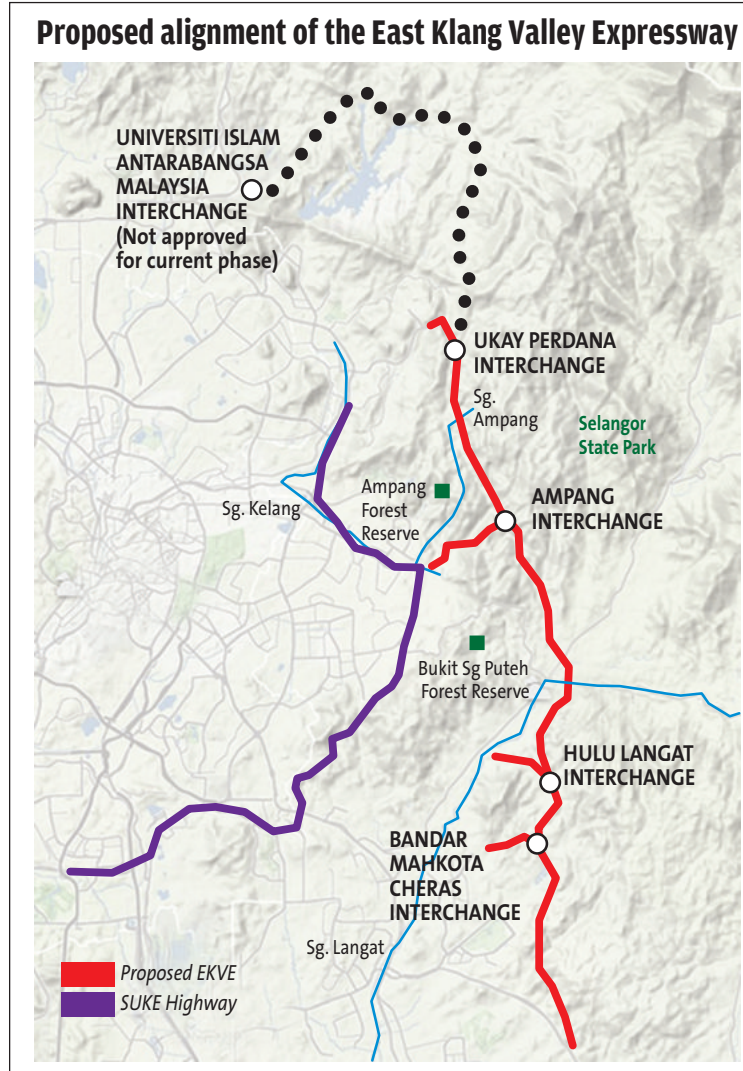
"Natural landslides upstream have made the water murky now, just imagine how the construction will affect water quality," he said.

The NGOs also felt that the erosion preventive measures suggested in the DEIA would not reduce its harmful impact much.

They insisted on re-aligning the highway and wanted to be on the panel that would oversee this.

"The erosion modelling used by the DEIA had not taken into consideration the increased risk of flooding shown in the past few years.

"The highway planning also did not look at the additional highways



we have in Kuala Lumpur and MyRapid Transit, it is still based on a study done in the 1990s.

"Furthermore, instead of building this highway, why not just build an elevated MRR2 since they are connecting the same places?" Lim queried.

He said the groups acknowledged that a stretch of the earlier proposed alignment that would affect the Klang Gate Quartz Ridge was not approved.

"However, there is no guarantee that it will not happen in the future. We fear that once the highway goes through, the whole forest will be

opened up for development."

Lim urged the federal and state governments to consult the public whenever a forest reserve would be affected.

"The state government has made a ruling to protect forest reserves but it has not been fully adhered to, look at what happened in the Kanching Forest Reserve.

"Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir has said that Kedah is willing to forgo timber revenue.

"If Kedah can do it, Selangor should be the one leading the way," said Lim.

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CHECK out these highlights from mob.com.my. Download the Metro Online Broadcast (MOB) app via <http://bit.ly/MOBiPhoneApp> (iOS) and [mob.com.my/androidapp](http://bit.ly/mob.com.my/androidapp). Also, visit www.mob.com.my to write and share your stories.



Educational break for students

Not everyone likes staying home during a term break. Some 100 students made good use of their holiday by enrolling in a three-day environmental and music camp.



Spicing up K-pop style

Dressing like a K-pop star is made easy with stores such as Spicy Color popping up in Malaysia. The apparel brand made its debut in Kuala Lumpur bringing a collection of the latest fashion trends from the Asian nation.



METRO ONLINE BROADCAST
people-powered online news

Free trees and eco bags for shoppers

Some 550 saplings were distributed free to shoppers at Bangsar Shopping Centre this week. The event was organised by the Free Tree Society Kuala Lumpur in conjunction with World Environment Day to create awareness on keeping the urban landscape green.



Metro Watch

FORUM ON FASTING

Sri Kota Specialist Medical Centre Klang, will be organising a "Healthy Fasting During Ramadan" public forum on June 15, from 9am to noon at Wing B, Level 2, Sri Kota Specialist Medical Centre, Klang. Refreshments will be provided for registered participants. Admission is free. Participants are advised to book in advance as seats are limited. For details, call 03-3373 3636 ext 7313 / 7335 / 7356.

ART EXHIBITION

An exhibition titled "Flesh: Blacks & Whites" by local contemporary artist Sean Lean is now ongoing at Wei-Ling Contemporary, at G212&213A Ground Floor, The Gardens Mall, Kuala Lumpur. The exhibition will end on June 20. Wei-Ling Contemporary is open daily from 10am to 9pm. Admission is free. For details, call 03-2260 1106 or 03-2282 8323, email weiling.shaz@gmail.com or visit www.weiling-gallery.com

CARPARK EXIT CLOSURE

Effective June 10 at 11pm, the direct exit from Mid Valley Megamall's carpark (Level P1 and P2) to Bangsar will be temporarily closed to facilitate future improvements on the traffic circulation of the vicinity. Motorists are advised to follow the temporary exit located at the ground deck Zone B entrance next to The Gardens South Tower. For details, call 03-2289 8747 (Stephanie Tan).

ACCOUNTING SYMPOSIUM

Monash University invites postgraduate students and researchers to its "Accounting & Finance Research Issues in Malaysian Capital Markets" symposium. It will be held on June 13, from 9am to 5pm at Monash University Sunway Campus. Admission is free. Interested postgraduate students and researchers should email laura.lim@monash.edu or visit www.monash.edu.my

BLOOD DONATION DRIVE

In conjunction with World Blood Donor Day, Gleneagles Kuala Lumpur will be organising a blood donation drive on June 13, from 9am to 1pm. The drive will be held on the 8th Floor, Medical Office Block, Gleneagles Kuala Lumpur. For details, call 03-4141 3183 (Samiha) / 03-4141 3192 (Adeline).

KOI ART EXHIBITION

More than 30 pieces of koi art will be featured at the "Zhi Long Shen: Inspiration" solo exhibition by Zubair Afandi Omar, from now till July 3 at the Universiti Malaya Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur. The exhibition is to open to public from 9.30pm to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Admission is free.

WATER DISRUPTION

There will be a water disruption in Klang and Gombak on June 12. For details, call 1800-88-5252, SMS PUSPEL <space> <complaint / feedback> to 39222 or email puspel@sya-bas.com.my

PUBLIC HEALTH TALK

Tung Shin Hospital is organising a public health talk on June 8 from 1pm to 4.30pm. Admission is free. For details, call 03-20372288.



Total disregard: A whopping 28 lots of land in Jalan Sungai Tekali, Hulu Langat have been illegally stripped bare due to logging and sand mining.

Hulu Langat forests laid bare

Illegal land clearing and sand mining mar two areas

DEFORESTATION and illegal land clearing were reported at two separate locations in the Hulu Langat district this year.

In mid-July, *StarMetro* highlighted the illegal felling of rubber trees at the Sungai Tekali forest area, raising the risk of flooding and mudslides.

A check with the Kajang Municipal Council (MPKj) revealed that both the land clearing and sawmill where the timber was sold were illegal.

A total of 28 lots of land, with a combined area of 22.7ha, had been cleared.

An environmentalist said the water banks along the cleared land appeared

on the verge of collapse, and could cause flooding and mud slides.

Commonly used as fuelwood and for making furniture, rubberwood has become a major source of revenue for the Malaysian timber industry.

Logging royalties for rubberwood is exempted to benefit the country's economy.

However, the two-decade old policy has also brought about negative consequences.

Even though no royalty is paid, operators still need a licence from the Forestry Department to log rubberwood.

In mid-November, *StarMetro*



Dumping ground: Bukit Enggang turned from a forest reserve into a government bungalow cluster that did not materialise, has reduced to a "popular" dump site.



Brewing calamities: Soil erosion on the banks of this stream running through the area where rubberwood is illegally logged on a large scale is worrying.

reported that Bukit Enggang had become a dumping ground.

Once a forest reserve, it was subsequently divided into hundreds of bungalow lots and given to civil servants.

Sixteen years later, the secluded hill has since been turned into an area for activities such as logging and sand mining.

While Bukit Enggang is out-of-bounds to "unauthorised vehicles", lorries laden with sand and rubbish were reportedly spotted entering and exiting the area.

Joggers are the only outsiders allowed to enter in the morning.

Existing infrastructure at the site has been stolen, damaged or abandoned.

A huge sand mining site was spotted in a secluded area, with no sign indicating they are licensed to carry out the activities.

What used to be bungalow plots are covered in thick undergrowth.

Villagers of Sungai Serai, located at the foot of the hill said the area where trees were felled was supposed to be a buffer zone between Bukit Enggang



and Sungai Serai.

MPKj public relations head Kamarul Izlan Sulaiman said a stop-work order and compound notice was issued in July to landowners of the Sungai Tekali forest area under Act 70A (1) of the Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974 for carrying out earth works without the council's approval.

Offenders will have to pay a compound of RM25,000, and a fine not exceeding RM50,000 or face imprisonment not exceeding five years, or both if found guilty.

Razaly said land at the 348ha affected site on Bukit Enggang had already been transferred to individuals, most of whom were high-ranking government officers.

"While the authorities acknowledged that the land has been trespassed, neither the Hulu Langat Land Office nor MPKj can take action as the land is under private ownership.

"Any action has to be taken by the individual landowners," said Razaly.

Driven out of their unsafe homes

A GROUP of residents in Taman Permata, Dengkil, were forced to live in tents for almost half a year after the local council declared that their low-cost flats were unsafe for occupation.

Some 80 affected families had been living in tents put up at the car-park, or at a nearby hall, for about five months, and were even forced to celebrate Deepavali under those conditions.

The residents had said that their flat units had cracks all over, tiles were coming off, ceilings were on the verge of collapsing and a sinkhole had appeared.

While some of the residents returned to their flats after two weeks, others continued to stay put in the tents that were put up by the authorities as temporary accommodation.

The former estate workers and their families were relocated to the low-cost units about 14 years ago when their estates were acquired for the development of Putrajaya.

About 400 families had moved into the flats from four estates —



Sleepless nights: Taman Permata residents roughing it out in the tents.

Prang Besar, Sedgeley, Medengley and Galloway — in 1999.

Public Works Institute of Malaysia (Ikram) engineers had been carrying out checks at the site ever since the building was deemed unsafe.

In mid-September, Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim announced that residents could move back to their flats within one month, after tenders were called for and the repairs completed.

He also said that the state government had identified a 12ha land, located some 5km away from the current flats, to build new houses for the residents.

However, the state said the Federal Government, which relocated the former estate workers to the flats, was responsible for building the houses for them.

It was reported earlier that the former estate workers were prom-



Danger below: The presence of a sinkhole leaves the flat residents uneasy.

ised link houses but got flats instead. Meanwhile, residents claimed that their units were beyond repair and that the RM500,000 allocated by the state government was insufficient to rectify the structural damage to the buildings.

Taman Permata residents had also sought the Prime Minister's help via the submission of a memorandum seeking Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's intervention in ending their misery.

Sepang Municipal Council (MPSepang) president Mohd Sayuthi

Bakar said Permodalan Negeri Selangor Berhad (PNSB) had engaged a contractor to repair the flats.

"The repairs are expected to be completed by the end of this month or early next month," he said.

"The repairs for the flats have been completed. The contractor just needs to complete the premiss for the parking area."

On the residents' demand for landed housing, Sayuthi said that would depend on negotiations between the state and federal governments.

MNS reiterates call for study

EIA report needed before logging or sand mining activities take place

A DETAILED Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) study must be conducted before approval is given for activities such as extraction of natural resources such as timber and sand, said the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS).

"Similar studies should also be conducted for dump sites," said MNS vice-president Henry Goh.

"The MNS is very concerned about the rampant deforestation activities being carried out nationwide.

"The latest report on Bukit Enggang is just one example. We are not against development but all plans must include an EIA study."

Goh said regular checks for compliance must be carried out and enforcement implemented, with adequate penalties imposed if parties concerned are found to be not complying to pre-set conditions.

"Such actions will also mitigate any potential environmental issues which are likely to impact and cause inconveniences at a later stage," he said.

"Green lungs within the major cities and towns in Malaysia are few and far between. All efforts should be made to preserve and conserve such areas."

Goh said this in response to a StarMetro report recently entitled "Conditions going downhill/The dumping hill" that highlighted the deteriorating condition at Bukit Enggang in Hulu Langat.



Digging away: The natural resources inside Bukit Enggang are being removed on a constant basis.

The former forest reserve site had been earmarked for a bungalow housing project but has instead become a dumping ground, and also an area for activities such as logging and sand mining.

The site's ravaged condition poses a concern to the villagers of Sungai Serai, whose village is located at the foot of the hill.

When contacted, Kajang Municipal Council (MPKj) public relations head Kamarul Izlan Sulaiman said the matter had to be referred to the Hulu Langat Land Office.

"Issues on logging and sand mining comes under the Land Office's jurisdiction," he said.

"MPKj's Planning Department

records show that the land status for Bukit Enggang states that they are agricultural lots belonging to individuals.

"No applications for planning permission have been submitted."

To-date, Dusun Tua assemblyman Razaly Hassan said he has yet to receive a reply from the Hulu Langat Land Office on Bukit Enggang's land status.

"I will raise the matter again at the upcoming district action meeting on Nov 23," said Razaly.

"This meeting will be attended by assemblymen and officers from government agencies that come under the Hulu Langat district."

The Hulu Langat Land Office could not be contacted for comments.



Metro Watch

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LANE NARROWING

From now onwards, the two-lane Jalan Tun Mohd Fuad, TTDI heading right towards Jalan Damansara will be merged to a single lane for a stretch of 30m to make way for the new MRT station.

DONATIONS

All donation for victims of Typhoon Haiyan can be made out in the name of Malaysian Red Crescent Society. Cheques can be sent to Lot PT 54, Lengkok Belfield, Off Jalan Wisma Putra, 50460 Kuala Lumpur or credited into Maybank account number 514422102657. Donations are tax exempted. Write full name and address at the back of the cheque for the official receipt to be posted. For details, call 03-2143 7872 (Shamsiah)/ 03-2144 8122 (Shamsinar).

ROLE OF WOMEN

THE Malaysian Ceylonese Congress Women's Section is holding a talk on "Role of Women from Womb to Tomb" on Nov 23 at No 15, Jalan 18/16, Taman Kanagapuram, Petaling Jaya, Selangor. The talk is from 9am to 11am. Topics include "How Religion has affected the progress of Indian Women" as well as pointers on social etiquette and financial education. Registration is at RM20 per person. For details and registration, call N. Devamala (019-383 3947) or K. Shamini (013-331 2727).

ALL ABOUT GENES

In conjunction with World Diabetes Day and in collaboration with The Lions Club, a free talk titled "Listening To Your Genes, Talking To Your Genes - Taking Control of Disease And Ageing" will be held tomorrow at the Crystal Crown Hotel in Petaling Jaya (2pm to 5pm). Dr Rajbans Singh and Datuk Dr Rajen M. will be the speakers. For RSVP, call 03-7965 2888 or register online: www.myhealthseminar.com

KIRKBYTES UNITE

All Kirkbyites are invited for a get-together high-tea at Armada Hotel (Utara Coffee House) on Dec 7. Fee is RM35. For details, call 017-316 8717 (Leela), 03-7728 3826 (Salma) or 016-498 4908 (Tan).

OLD BOYS REUNION

Maxwell School Old Boys Association of Kuala Lumpur is organising a dinner on Nov 16 at the Royal Selangor Club Bukit Kiara, at 7pm. Fee is RM50 per pax and the theme is smart-casual. For details, call 012-919 0353 (Ahmad), 016-225 7574 (Max) or 017-685 5408 (Ashvinder).

HEALTH TALK

Tropicana Medical Centre is having a free health talk on cancer prevention and detection on Nov 16, from 10am to 1pm. For reservation, call 03-6287 1198 (Fazulie)/018-211 6789 (Huda) or email full name and contact number to huda@tropicana-medicalcentre.com



Just one click: MOBbers can now log in with their Facebook accounts, allowing them to share their stories and comments in just one click.

Sharing stories hassle-free

THE new and improved version of Metro Online Broadcast (MOB) will now allow MOBbers to send and share their stories by just logging in with their Facebook accounts.

This replaces the old system, which required users to fill in their particulars and sign up with a new MyStar account.

MOBbers can now share their stories, images, videos and comments with everyone with just one click.

"I find it very easy to use and it is a great idea since almost every Malaysian is on Facebook nowadays. Even various companies and organisations are now expected to have a Facebook page," said engineering student Calvin Lim.

"I think it is very convenient that MOB is using this feature now. Signing up for a new account with any website can be tedious and MOB has removed that problem," said pharmacy student Amelia Ng.

Her friends and classmates agreed with her, saying that the new system was better for MOBbers.

"What I like about it is that we no longer have to open a new account. With MOB connected to Facebook, we don't have to remember an additional user ID and password," said Eunice Law.

"This is a great idea and has made Facebook sharing very easy. Our MOB stories can also spread quickly when they are shared on social media," added Jocelyn Teh.

MOB is available on mobile platforms and can be downloaded for free from the App Store and Google Play for both iOS and Android systems respectively.

Existing users of the MOB mobile app will have to update the app on their devices to its latest version 2.0.0.

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A windfall for two students

Two university students walked away with heavier pockets and a big smile on their faces during the



recent MYC! Red Bull Monkey Run Inter Uni Cup 2013 at the Universiti Malaya Sports Centre. Participants were required to jump, swing and climb through the courses, which included a giant yellow coconut, tree hug, jungle slide and balancing act, among others.

New look for Guinness

Guinness Anchor Berhad (GAB) revealed a new look for one of the company's best loved brew, the Guinness Foreign Extra Stout (GFES) in Kuala Lumpur recently. The distinctive black look with gold finish, paired with contemporary typography, has been made available for consumers in the Klang Valley since Nov 7.



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No permit issued

Authorities looking for ways to deal with illegal logging and sandmining at Bukit Enggang

By YIP YOKE TENG
teng@thestar.com.my

THE authorities seem to be at a loss on how to deal with the illegal logging and sandmining issue at Bukit Enggang, Hulu Langat.

The relevant government agencies confirmed no permit has been given to any of the logging and sandmining activities in Bukit Enggang.

The Hulu Langat Land and District Office, in a written reply to *The Star*, clarified that as the land had been transferred to individuals under Section 76 of the National Land Code, the land owners had the responsibility to abide by land use requirements.

When contacted, the Kajang Municipal Council and Selangor Forestry Department both said it is not under their purview. Sources in the departments said "the culprits are very aggressive as gangsters and VIPs are involved".

StarMetro highlighted last month the hill is being ravaged at an alarm-

ing rate.

The Selangor government had between 1996 and 1997, divided Bukit Enggang into 600 bungalow plots of 0.4ha each and handed them over to high-ranking civil servants from the police, army and then Anti-Corruption Agency.

The area which was once a forest reserve is being stripped bare and villagers fear a landslide and floods will occur.

It was also learned that the planned bungalows could not be built because the area's infrastructure, including roads and drainage, were not built to specifications.

The Land Office was said to have appointed a contractor which did not even get approval from the local council before starting work.

The Land Office's statement, however, clarified the infrastructure built was not a project under the Land Office hence failure to conform to specifications were beyond its jurisdiction.

The plots were for agriculture land



Stripped bare: The deforestation at Bukit Enggang is taking place at an alarming rate.

and the department has not received any application from the landowners to convert it to residential use.

"The landowners' negligence has resulted in the illegal activities reported and the hill's current condition.

"This has had a negative impact not only to nearby residents, but also the Government has suffered a loss in revenue from sand-mining permits and has to direct manpower to take enforcement action against the culprits," the letter reads, conceding that it was also difficult for officers to enter the area because of the obstructions built which were manned by "aggressive parties".

The Land Office has conducted several operations on the illegal sand-mining activities and seized some machinery in the area.

Following *StarMetro's* expose, the department visited the site on Nov 18 but no sand-mining activity was spotted during the visit.

As for logging, the letter states that it is beyond the Land Office's powers but the state's Forestry Department has also said it is not under them as the area is no longer a forest reserve.

The Land Office has suggested the state government confiscate several lots in accordance with Section 128 of the National Land Code.



Flashback: StarMetro's front-page report on Nov 13.

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Top 10 items taken from hotels



We all love the comforts that a hotel stay offers, such as room service and house-keeping. However, some want to take the experience back with them by keeping a few "souvenirs" from their stay. Some of the items taken include hairdryers,



Majority of survey respondents aim to cut down on electricity usage

With the new year seeing hikes in electricity tariffs, 1,509 people responded to a survey by The Star Online expressing how they aimed to cut down on electricity usage. 72% of respondents would like to make it a habit to switch off electrical appliances while not in use, while 28% of respondents would like to replace their appliances with energy-saving ones.



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bathrobes, kettles and even the television remote control!

Two conferred titles by Pahang

SYARIKAT Prasarana Negara Berhad (Prasarana) Group Finance Director Mohd Zahir Zahur Hussain and Group Bus Director Zohari Sulaiman have been conferred the Darjah Indera Mahkota Pahang (DIMP) which carries the title "Datuk".

The investiture ceremony was held in conjunction with the birthday of the Sultan of Pahang, Sultan Ahmad Shah.

Tengku Mahkota of Pahang Tengku Abdullah ibni Sultan Ahmad Shah presented the title to Mohd Zahir and Zohari.

Prasarana Group Managing Director Datuk Seri Shahril Mokhtar, who had recently conferred the first class Sri Sultan Ahmad Shah Pahang (SSAP) award, thanked the Pahang

Sultan Ahmad Shah in recognising the contribution of the Prasarana senior leadership team members as well as the group's employees.

"We are deeply humbled by the recognition of Tuanku. It is a testament of the dedication and contribution of all Prasarana Group employees to the state and the nation," Shahril added.

Zohari, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of Rapid Bus Sdn Bhd, was the Prasarana Group Director for Infrastructure Services in 2011. Prior to that, he had a stellar career with KTMB, STAR and PUTRA LRT.

Mohd Zahir is a chartered accountant with broad experience locally and abroad.



For his contributions: Shahril has been conferred the SSAP award that carries the 'Datuk' title.

Room for improvement: The Hulu Selangor District Council's dog pound in Kuala Kubu Baru, Hulu Selangor. In June, the council said it was planning to increase the number of cages here to accommodate more dogs. — filepic



Valley View

JADE CHAN
JADE@THESTAR.COM.MY

Eye-opening events

Unfavourable incidents show need for good workmanship, management and proper guidelines

THE year 2013 started off with a bang — literally — with news of a collapsed flyover near Cyberjaya.

The story quickly went viral on the Internet and social media, with netizens sharing photos of the damaged structure and mess around the site.

Fortunately, no one was hurt during the incident, as the flyover was closed to traffic.

However, the collapse highlighted issues such as shoddy construction and jurisdiction as no one authority took responsibility for the incident.

Poor workmanship was also a likely cause that forced a group of residents to live in tents after their low-cost flats were declared unsafe for occupation.

The former estate workers and their families were relocat-

ed to the flats in Taman Permata, Dengkil, more than a decade ago when their estates were acquired for the development of Putrajaya.

Deforestation, illegal land clearing and environmental degradation were also reported at two separate sites in Sungai Tekali and Bukit Enggang, both of which are located in the Hulu Langat district.

Meanwhile, the Kajang

Municipal Council (MPKj) came under the spotlight for two different issues.

First, was the tussle between a group of councillors and MPKj's senior management, particularly the council president.

Claiming that they were concerned about MPKj's mismanagement, weak administration and dubious practices, the councillors tabled a vote of no confidence and staged a walkout right after the swearing-in of new councillors in August.

The dispute was brought to the state government's attention, and Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim subse-

quently asked the councillors to sort out matters between them and the council.

The second incident was that of a video of MPKj workers' alleged mishandling and mistreating stray dogs during a dog-catching exercise.

The video, which was shot by a Malaysian Independent Animal Rescue (MIAR) volunteer, also went viral online, with netizens criticising the inhumane method of catching and handling the strays.

The incident highlighted the need for local councils to have proper guidelines and better training for those involved in dog-catching operations.



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It's Christmas time in Hartamas

Three "wise men" were sighted around the corner of Jalan 22/70A in Desa Sri Hartamas, pointing towards a star.

Members of River of Life Sanctuary have been busy with Christmas decorations, this year being the first time they are celebrating Christmas in their new

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building located at Desa Sri Hartamas.

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An event to watch out for

Celebrities and corporate figures gather for the launch of 'Time Kulture' showcase. >19



Durian feast in China

An all-you-can-eat durian feast was held in Beijing recently as part of the Malaysia Products and Cultural Fair. >23



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Langkat hills laid bare

The illegal felling of rubber trees at the Sungai Tekali forest area in Hulu Langkat raises the risk of flooding and mudslides. >2&3



Sad sight

Bare, brown patches can be seen around the Hulu Langkat forest area where deforestation has taken place for various reasons, including the illegal felling of rubberwood (inset). – By SAM THAM / The Star



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Denuded of rubber trees

Illegal logging exposes large tract of Sungai Tekali forest to soil erosion

By YIP YOKE TENG
teng@thestar.com.my
Photos by SAM THAM

THE exemption of royalty on rubberwood logging may have helped to boost commercial development of the agricultural commodity but it has also caused severe damage to the environment, with more problems brewing.

StarMetro discovered that a large tract of land in the Sungai Tekali forest area, Hulu Langat, has been cleared.

Rubber trees are being felled and the timber sold at a sawmill at the site.

A check with the Kajang Municipal Council (MPKj) revealed that both the sawmill and the clearing of land being carried out are illegal.

A spokesman from the council said the planning department had a rude shock too when the matter was brought to their attention because 28 lots of land, with a combined area of 22.7ha, had been cleared.

He said the council would be issuing notices to stop the unscrupulous operators.

Environmentalist Lim Teck Wyn, who was present during the site visit by StarMetro, pointed out that the site was being abused,



Caught in the act: A lorry was seen transporting sand out of the Sungai Tekali forest area in Hulu Langat.

with no control on soil erosion.

The site where logging is being carried out is hidden from view by hoardings and the area next to it, which has signs of sand-mining activities, is left abandoned.

Through the hoardings, one can see the sawmill, piles of rubber

tree logs as well as the now-bare hill terraces where rubber trees used to be.

Worse still, with no rehabilitation measures taken, the banks of a stream running through the cleared land are on the verge of collapse, and could cause flooding

and mud slides.

Rubberwood, usually used as fuelwood, has become a major source of revenue for the Malaysian timber industry. It is a popular wood for making furniture and

> SEE NEXT PAGE



Sign of trouble: Lim pointing at the bank of a stream running through the cleared land which is on the verge of collapse.

'Authorities not stern enough'

> FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

other products.

The logging royalty for rubberwood is, therefore, exempted to benefit the country's economy. However, the policy that has been in place for about 20 years has also brought about negative consequences.

Lim said the problem of rubberwood logging was widespread and the relevant authorities were lax in carrying out enforcement measures.

"Even though royalty is exempted, the operators still need a licence from the Forestry Department to log rubberwood.

"However, the authorities have not been stern enough in enforcing the law. This could be due to the fact that there is no incentive, since the royalty is waived," he said.

Apart from stricter enforcement, he suggested that the Government consider increasing the royalty to protect the environment.

"Its damage to the environment is the same as other logging activities. It can cause flooding, soil erosion, water pollution and landslide if the area is too steep," he said.

"This policy must be reviewed as more than 40,000ha of Latex Timber Clone (LTC) plantations have been identified for logging under the National Key Economic Areas (NKEA). Also, the replanting plans must be closely monitored," he said.

LTC is a rubber tree species that produces a good yield of latex as well as timber, but the latter is given priority in view of the high demand for various industrial purposes.

Lim highlighted that apart from

Even though royalty is exempted, the operators still need a licence from the Forestry Department to log rubberwood.

— LIM TECK WYN

the Forestry Department, the Environment Department could also help monitor the situation as the state director had the power to request for an Environmental Impact Assessment on a logging site measuring more than 500ha, or if the site was in a sensitive area.

Even sanctioned logging of rubberwood had been reported to have caused much suffering to the surrounding population.

A large portion of secondary forests in Johor, especially near the Endau-Rompin National Park, has been cleared for LTC plantations.

Since 2009, there have been reports on increased flooding, damaged natural habitat for wildlife such as tigers and elephants, and reduction of water catchment areas in the state.

The Malaysian Nature Society is still up in arms against the policy whereby a forest reserve does not need to be degazetted if trees are felled and replaced with LTC for the production of timber, despite the damage such actions cause to the biodiversity.



Slip sliding away: The bank of this stream is on the verge of collapse, raising the risk of flooding and mudslide.

Metro Watch

BLOOD DONATION

Kinrara Metta Buddhist Society (KMBS) will be organising a blood donation drive on July 14 from 10am to 4pm at B2, Jalan Bangau 11, Bandar Puchong Jaya. Free health screening and workshops will also be held. There will be bone scanning service and traditional Chinese medicine ear acupuncture treatment. Free lunch will be provided to all visitors and donors. For details, visit www.kinrarametta.org or call Eric at 012-238 0631/ Lye Lee at 012-300 5432.

LANE CLOSURE

MRT Corp will conduct a partial lane closure in Jalan Sultan, Jalan Tun H.S. Lee and Jalan Panggong nightly from 10pm to 5am, from July 11 to July 25. For details, visit www.mymrt.com.my or www.mymrt-underground.com.my, or call the MRT Hotline at 1-800-82-6868.

EXTENDED HOURS

The National Blood Bank has extended its hours in the month of Ramadan for those interested to donate blood. From July 11 until Aug 2, the blood bank will be open from 8.30am to 8.30pm. For details, visit www.pdn.gov.my

COMPOUND DISCOUNTS

The Shah Alam City Council is offering discounts up to 80% for all council-related compounds during the fasting month. For details, call 03-5510 5133 or visit www.mbsa.gov.my

TALK ON CHILDREN

The "Emotionally Healthy Children Thrive!" talk will be held on July 20 from 9am to 12.30pm at Sunway Mas Community Centre, Jalan PJU 1/3G, Pusat Dagangan Sunway Mas, Petaling Jaya. The talk is free but registration is required. For details, email smcc.community@gmail.com or call 012-707 2095.

EZ-PAYMENT COUNTER

The Petaling Jaya City Council will set up a mobile counter in Jalan Cecawi 6/18A, Kota Damansara (close to McDonald's) for the public to settle their council-related bills and summons. The counter will be open 10am to 3pm daily until July 14. For details, call 03-7956 3544

Exemption of royalty on rubberwood logging until 2015

THE exemption of royalty on rubberwood extracted from areas outside Permanent Reserved Forests (PRF) is until 2015.

Peninsular Malaysia Forestry Department deputy director-general (operation/technical) Datuk Nik Mohd Shah said the decision was made in 2012 at the 68th meeting of The National Land Council (MTN) to encourage rubberwood furniture industries.

He explained that under the National Forest Policy 1978, logging of timber from forested land was encouraged on a sustainable basis for economic benefits to the relevant industries in the states.

"Under the National Timber Industrial Plan (NATIP), plantation wood, especially from rubber replanting, are encouraged to provide for the downstream industrial activities.

"As such, since the 1990s, rubber-

wood logged outside PRF have been exempted from payment of royalties," he said.

However, the department is tasked with monitoring rubberwood logging through the issuance of licences, and to ensure that the rubberwood comes from legal sources.

He said Section 19, 28 and 40 of the National Forestry Act 1984 permitted the removal of forest produce (timber, including rubberwood) by

the state authority through the issuance of Licences (Form 1), Minor Licences (Form 3) and Removal Licences (Form 5) from the State Forestry Department. Offenders can be fined or jailed.

He added that the Malaysian Timber Industrial Board (MTIB) also monitored rubberwood processing and furniture exports from peninsular Malaysia, especially to the European Union.

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