



Part of the North Pangkor Forest Reserve being cleared for a marine biotechnology park project. — NST picture by Jamah Nasri

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No EIA, but rape of forest reserve begins

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PANGKOR: A company building an organic farm-cum-resort near Teluk Dalam is felling trees and levelling hills without an Environmental Impact Assessment report.

A visit by the *New Straits Times* to the 0.75ha tract of land at the North Pangkor Forest Reserve found excavators being used to level hills which were at least 30m high.

Trees felled in the area were chain-sawed into beams and used to build several structures there, while a pond was dug to pump out groundwater flowing along a water channel.

There is work going on to build a make-shift jetty on the beach using boulders, timber and sand from the forest reserve.

Perak Department of Environment deputy director Norazizi Adinan said

the department had yet to receive an EIA report from Global Hi-Q, the company responsible for the project.

Initial proposals for the project included building restaurants and chalets with over 80 rooms, all of which were subject to EIA conditions, he said.

Kinta/Manjung district forestry officer Abd Ramlizauyahuddin Mahli said the company was issued a user's permit on Sept 16 for 20ha of the forest reserve for "rearing marine fish using biotechnology and cleaning seawater in Lumut".

The site, comprising three hectares of virgin forest and 17ha of production forest, contains some 500 trees, mostly species such as *kelat*, *kandis* and *penarahan*.

It also has some intermediate quality timber such as *medang* and *nyatoh*, and several quality species like *balau* and *resak*.

A recent check by Drainage and Irrigation officers found seawater near the cleared area "a little muddy".

"There could be problems if there was heavy rain, as the soil from the exposed hill would be washed into the sea," district engineer Roslan Sukimin said.

The soil could kill corals and block sunlight from reaching the underwater plants, thus affecting the food chain and sea ecology, he added.

Roslan also advised the company to follow guidelines under the Erosion and Sediment Control Plan.

Environmentalists from the Perak Environmental Society and Malaysian Nature Society have been critical of the project, protesting that such development should not be allowed in a forest reserve.

Sitiawan state assemblyman Ngeh Koo Ham said such development in a forest reserve was a violation of the law.