

Another hill in Penang 'stripped naked'

CLEARED: Barren patch atop Bukit Sg Pinang raises fresh concern, says Teluk Bahang rep



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ANOTHER hill in the state has been partly stripped naked since late last year.

Checks by the *New Straits Times* yesterday showed a visibly barren patch atop Bukit Sungai Pinang, measuring about 4ha.

It is not immediately known the purpose behind the hill clearing as no signboard has been put up. Photos of the barren hill began making its rounds on social networking site Facebook since Christmas day.

Teluk Bahang assemblyman Datuk Shah Headan Ayoob Hussain Shah said he realised that part of the hill was being cleared since last October.

He believed the work was being carried out manually as none of the usual heavy machinery were spotted on the hilltop.

"The people of Balik Pulau want the state authorities to come clean on what development is being planned for Bukit Sungai Pinang. We have every right to know.

"We also want to know if any approval had been given for the hill clearing or if it is being done illegally," he said.

Shah Headan Ayoob said he dreaded to think what would happen if it rained heavily.

"Heavy rain will bring with it mud water from the hilltop, which will flow into the stream below. This stream connects to Sungai Pinang, the main water source.

"Also, there are numerous farms below the hill," he added.

He said it was an irony for the DAP-led state administration to continue preaching its "go green" mantra when everything is turning "brown".

"One by one, the lush green hills are being stripped naked and being replaced by brown patches. The state is fast becoming a laughing stock, especially among coffee shop patrons."

Bukit Sungai Pinang is located in front of Bukit Laksamana, a water catchment for the Teluk Bahang Dam, where illegal development was reported to have taken place last June.

In Bukit Laksamana's case, the developer had stripped off 4.47ha of trees and greenery for the construction of 36 chalets in a blatant rejection of two stop-work orders from the state government. Following that revelation, the state government had asked for the area to be mapped.

Hills going bald in Penang is nothing new as several had been cleared, whether legally or illegally, in recent years.

They include Bukit Relau in Jalan Bukit Gambier, which has since earned the moniker "Botak Hill", as well as Bukit Kukus in Paya Terubong.



The barren patch, measuring about 4ha, atop Bukit Sungai Pinang in Penang is cause for worry especially in the event of heavy rain. (Inset) Teluk Bahang assemblyman Datuk Shah Headan Ayoob Hussain Shah. Pix by Danial Saad

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