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# Bukit Gasing still needs help

By JADE CHAN

THERE is an urgent need for proper sustainable maintenance and rehabilitation of the Bukit Gasing Education Forest using natural methods, said Datuk Dr Wong Sai Hou.

Dr Wong, who is the Association of Backpackers Malaysia (ABM) president and United Coalition of Residents (UCOR) Petaling Jaya adviser, highlighted concerns on the maintenance and rehabilitation of the forest, such as its walking trails, streams and slopes, which he said did not follow the sustainable development concept.

“The cut-and-fill method used to address the landslip that occurred in April last year is unsightly; the soil reinforcing should’ve been done using natural methods instead,” said Dr Wong, adding that it was understood that about RM1mil was spent to address the landslip problem.

“There is also no proper drainage system.

“Soil erosion has caused the water in the stream to be stagnant, while the drainage system has affected the cleanliness and flow of the water in the stream and drains.

“The three flights of concrete staircases built to lead the new trail to the original trail are unnecessary and there are concerns that the erosion and drainage system will affect the safety of the houses nearby.



**Sorry sight:** Dr Wong (right) and Kalithasan checking the condition of the stream at the Bukit Gasing Educational Forest.

“There have also been no attempts to fortify the banks and hillslopes using natural cover like mangrove trees.”

Dr Wong said the pavement slabs, placed by volunteers along certain walking trails to make it easier to climb, were dangerous.

“The water run-off loosens the these slabs, and the stones could cause people to trip,” he said.

Present during the gathering were representatives from the Hartamas Hash House Harriers, Gerakan 4B, Tamil Bell Youths, Friends of Bukit Gasing (FOBG), Global Environment Centre (GEC), ABM and Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) Engineering Department.

GEC River Care Programme coordinator Dr K Kalithasan attributed improper planning to the pollution of water discharged from the nearby houses to Bukit Gasing.

“The lack of certain living creatures and river organisms indicate that the stream is of Class Four or Five, when it should be classified as Class One (water that is drinkable).

“There is no contact between the plants and water, which cuts down the ability of the plants to take in pollutants, hence the lack of a cleansing process,” he said.

Dr K Kalithasan said if the stream was clean enough, it could be turned into a bio-monitoring site for the public, especially children, to learn more about nature.

FOBG secretary Marylyn Thoo said the MBPJ should help ensure that the stream in Bukit Gasing was not polluted by averting household water discharge into the drains instead of the stream.

“FOBG carried out a joint survey with a group of Environmental Health and Safety students from Universiti Teknologi Mara last month and the findings revealed that the upstream areas (near the forest entrance) were polluted by household water.

“The MBPJ has repaired the eroded trails in Bukit Gasing last year that included the construction of a stone-walled drainage system, but it doesn’t blend with the environment as it looks more like a monsoon drain.

“There is still room for improvement,” she said.

On the interlocking bricks placed in certain trails, Thoo said walkers, especially senior citizens, preferred having them as they provided good footing for them to climb.

“We have proposed to the MBPJ to repair the steps of the trails with wood but it has not been implemented due to budget constraints,” she said.

Dr Wong called for a comprehensive review of Bukit Gasing to preserve its value as an educational forest, and possibly make it a place of historical interest.

“I have informed the local councillor and assemblyman about the issues.

“We must get all the stakeholders to submit their input and look at a proper rehabilitation plan for the forest,” said Dr Wong, adding that the meeting should be held within two weeks.