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Community under siege

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Mat Rempit attack guards, steal handphone and demand protection money

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MAIL EXCLUSIVE



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CAUGHT IN THE ACT: CCTV footage of the Mat Rempit throwing stones at the security guards

PETALING JAYA: THIS startling picture captured the rage of these hooligans, armed with rocks and hell bent on reclaiming their Rempit playground lost to a fortified neighbourhood.

The images, captured on CCTV at the guardhouse, spooked residents of Taman Gasing Indah, who all this while only heard tales of midnight raiders at the gated community.

Residents wanted *The Malay Mail* to publish these photographs to highlight the plight of terror-stricken residents who feared the thugs may unleash more violence.

For the past month, the usually placid community came under siege by a gang of Mat Rempit hell riders, threatening to terrorise the neighbourhood.

The residents' sole line of defence is a boom gate, manned by two hired guards.

The guards were usually subjected to verbal abuse by the gang, who would rev their machines and issue threats.

However, those threats escalated into violence last week when the gang, comprising eight to 10 teens, stormed the guardhouse and hurled rocks at the guards.

Apart from stealing one of the guards' cellphone, they also demanded the guards pay them 'protection money', promising retribution if their demand was not met.

Footages from the closed-circuit television (CCTV) system at 1.24am on Sept 26 showed eight to 10 teenagers arrived by motorcycles along the main road.

Three of them then ran towards the guardhouse throwing rocks at the two security guards by the boom-gate fronting the guardhouse, damaging the door of the guardpost.

Clearly outnumbered, the guards fled.

The incident took less than a minute.

One of the guards, Balwinder Singh, 21, said his mobile phone was stolen.

He said based on feedback from those on his contact list, the hooligans called numbers on his phone at random.

"They used my phone to call my colleagues demanding RM100 in protection money," Balwinder said.

Taman Gasing Indah Rukun Tetangga chairman Lfred Chuah said the problem stemmed from 2008, when Mat Rempit entered neighbourhoods in the wee hours of the morning and smashed car windscreens for loose change.

"The repeated incidents left us with little choice but to engage a security company and erect a boom gate to protect the neighbourhood."

He said security guards in Jalan 5/69 bore the brunt of harassment from the teens, following an incident where a guard ticked them off for being noisy and revving their machines.

The hooligans, he said, came on most weekend nights, hanging outside the entrance to Taman Gasing Indah, which is protected by a boom-gate.

Two police reports were lodged by private security company Bertam Security Services which supplies the guards - on Sept 19 and Sept 29 - but there was no action.

They then sought the aid of PJ city councillor Derek Fernandez, who text-messaged Selangor police chief Deputy Comm Datuk Tun Hisan Tun Hamzah, alerting him for action "before residents take the law into their hands".

Police set up a roadblock at 2am on Sunday outside Section 5 neighbourhood to deter troublemakers from entering the neighbourhood.

However, many residents felt the two-and-a-half hour road block was a lost opportunity to nab the culprits red-handed.

"The police should have come incognito and caught them in the act," said Chuah.

Rukun Tetangga Safety Committee chairman Eric Chew said the committee was worried equipment at the guardhouse would be damaged if these teenagers continued their harassment.

"We have floodlights and a CCTV system worth thousands of ringgit in place," he said.

When going undercover is not that easy

IT'S not that easy going undercover, says Petaling Jaya OCPD ACP Arjunaidi Mohamed.

He was responding to criticism police lost a chance to nab troublemakers at Taman Gasing Indah by having roadblocks which may have alerted the teenagers to their presence.

"We can't go undercover. If we do so, we would be unable to inform anyone, including residents," Arjunaidi said.

He said police officers were deployed to check the area after a report was lodged on Thursday.

"But when officers were there, nothing happened," he said, admitting the road block inhibited police from taking action as the adolescents kept away from the area.

"But if we do not raise a road block, how are we going to nab them?"

"We try our best to help residents there," he said, adding he did not construe residents' messages as a threat.

"We have good rapport with this community," Arjunaidi said, adding he did not think they will take the law into their hands. Bukit Gasing assemblyman Edward Lee commended police for their effort, but said more discreet action was needed to arrest trouble makers.

"The police must maintain vigilance in the area to ensure residents are left in peace," he said. Lee said residents should hold discussions with teenagers to resolve matters.

"This is a social problem requiring a conciliatory approach by residents," he said.

He said organising games and charities for involvement of teenagers in community programmes was a good means of positively channelling their energy.

Local Mat Rempit Petaling Jaya OCPD ACP Arjunaidi Mohamed PJ city councillor
Derek Fernandez Taman Gasing Indah Taman Gasing Indah Rukun Tetangga chairman
Lfred Chuah

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