

Thursday, 20 November 2014, 4:21 PM

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Tranquil living on top a hill (/node/53300)

BY SHANTI GUNARATNAM (TAXONOMY/TERM/1776) - 16 NOVEMBER 2014 @ 8:05 AM

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BUKIT Gasing, a 100ha green lung that divides Petaling Jaya in Selangor from Kuala Lumpur, has long been a haven for nature lovers and sports enthusiasts who enjoy trail running, jogging, hiking, walking and cycling.

The highest point in Bukit Gasing at 160m is a well-known spot to enjoy a panoramic view of Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya. The hilltop area is also popular among Hindus who go there to worship at the famous Sivan temple.

It is not known how the place got its name, which translates into top (Gasing) hill (Bukit) in English.

The hill and the surrounding areas, which stretch from Section 5 in Petaling Jaya to Pantai Dalam and Taman Gasing Indah in Kuala Lumpur towards the south, was once a thriving rubber plantation.

Left abandoned for more than 50 years, the plantation was overtaken by lush secondary jungle covered with tropical trees and undergrowth, which became home to various fauna.

In the early days when the area was opened for residential development, many were reluctant to move there.

The lush jungle environment kept them at bay. In the 1960s, civil servants were given incentives to move to the neighbourhood.

Today, the scenario is different as people are keen to live in the area, said Gasing Indah residents association president Alfred Chuah.

"The greenery has attracted many home buyers to the area. It is also peaceful and quiet."

According to resident Simon Cheng, who first moved into the neighbourhood some 20 years ago, development is slowly impacting the physical surrounding of the area.

"Before the multi-storey condominiums were built in the neighbourhood, the air around here used to be cool. These days, we still enjoy the greenery, but to get the cool air, we have to walk closer to the condominiums which sit on the fringes on the forest," he said.

Another resident, Peter Lai, also one of the pioneer house buyers in Bukit Gasing, said the neighbourhood on the Petaling Jaya side was actually the second phase to be built by the developer.



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“The first phase is on the Kuala Lumpur side. Luckily for us, we are on the Petaling Jaya side of the hill, which has been gazetted as a reserve area,” he said.

The area covering about 36ha was gazetted as a green belt in 1961. However, the Kuala Lumpur side of the ridge covering about 50ha is not protected.

The Bukit Gasing educational forest was launched about 12 years ago and since then, it has become a popular recreational area for the locals. During the weekends, the place is packed with joggers, runners and hikers.

Residents Gurdeep Singh, Chan Siew Hong and Pang Kam Wong also echoed that overdevelopment had caused the area to lose its peace and tranquility.

They said residents were against overdevelopment as it would make the area congested. They want a peaceful neighbourhood, not some place that was crowded and noisy.

They added this was a peaceful and serene neighbourhood, and all of them played their part in ensuring that it stayed that way.

Gasing Indah Residents Association vice-president Benedict Indran said rubber trees could still be found in many parts of the forest reserve and some people had been profiting from illegal rubber tapping.

“We have seen people tapping rubber in the forest reserve, although it is prohibited. People continue doing so because there is no enforcement.”

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