

Headline	Another case of encroachment		
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Journalist	IVAN LOH	AdValue	RM 30,773
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Land-clearing detected

Six years after something similar was stopped, Gunung Panjang in Ipoh again appears to be a site of encroachment as residents near the area discover an attempt to clear part of the hill. > 2&3

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Mohd Rawi Abdullah (second from left) speaking with some The Dales residents at the site of the land clearing at Gunung Panjang, Ipoh.

By **IVAN LOH**
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SIX years have passed and Gunung Panjang, the limestone hill that overlooks the Panorama Tambun Perdana (The Dales) residential area on Jalan Tambun, is once again under threat.

Land-clearing activities have been noted by residents and they are worried that it could cause landslides or rockfalls as the nearest houses are just a stone's throw away from the hill.

Representing some 100 residents from the housing area, Wong Pek Yin, 50, said a contractor has encroached onto a piece of idle land, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Ipoh City Council, on Nov 17.

"The contractor claimed that he wants to start a durian plantation there and that it is a joint venture with the land owner.

"The contractor also claimed that he has sought permission from the Perak Islamic Affairs and Malay Customs Council for the project, which does not make sense," Wong told reporters during a press conference held by Perak Barisan Nasional Public Service Centre Chief Mohd Rawi Abdullah last Saturday.

"Fearing that something was amiss, we quickly lodged complaints to the city council and the police," she said.

It was reported in *MetroPerak* on Dec 2, 2011 that an individual was

Another case of encroachment

Residents say land clearing is taking place again on Gunung Panjang and are worried that it could cause landslide

allegedly trying to mine iron ore at the hill.

The individual had claimed then that he wanted to set up a herb farm there, which never materialised.

A petition was then submitted to the Raja Muda's office, the Perak Menteri Besar's office, the Land and Mines Department and the state Islamic Affairs and Malay Customs Council.

Wong said there is a distinct feeling of déjà vu, but with a different person this time round.

"We really do not know what the contractor's intentions are but the land-clearing activities stopped after we confronted him. We believe he has left and we will continue to monitor the situation for now," she said, adding an excavator was also spotted in the area.

"We are afraid that the



Flashback of the article from MetroPerak Dec 2, 2011 page 2.

land-clearing activities will cause a rock fall or landslide that could endanger lives," she added.

During the previous incident, Wong said the Perak Minerals and

Geoscience Department certified that the limestone hill is rich in iron ore, but is sensitive to physical disturbances as parts of it is made up of colluvial deposits – loose,

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The Dales residents protesting the land-clearing activities at the hill.



A higher view of Gunung Panjang, from The Dales, Ipoh.

unconsolidated sediment.

"The area in question is just a small rocky area and acts as a buffer zone in case of a rockslide or landslide. I do not think it is possible to have a durian plantation there due to the nature of the terrain," she said.

Wong said they have submitted a fresh petition to the menteri besar, Land and Mines Department, Ipoh City Council and the State Islamic Affairs and Malay Customs Council to take the necessary steps to protect the hill.

"We submitted the petition on Nov 28. We also submitted it to the Perak Sultan's office the next day.

"Just like the one we submitted in 2011, we hope action will be taken to prevent any development on the reserve land," she said.

"We are also appealing to the respective agencies to relocate the cemetery reserve in the area and to declare the existing cemetery reserve as a permanent buffer zone," she added.

Wong said she hopes the state will give serious attention to their petition and resolve the problem quickly before anything happens.

"We really do not want incidents like the flooding and mudslides that happened in Penang last month. We want action to be taken first before a tragedy strikes," she

said.

Mohd Rawi said he will follow up on the matter with the State Islamic Affairs and Malay Customs Council.

"We want to let them know of the situation and to urge them not to issue any licences to anyone to develop their land. Lives are at stake here. We really want to prevent any untoward incident from happening," he said.

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) field researcher Meor Razak Meor Abdul Rahman urged the residents to check with the city council on the status of the land there.

"They need to check the city council's Local Plan to see whether the area is still categorised as a Green Zone, which means that no development is allowed there.

"The same applies with the Perak and Land Mines Department or the Land Office. They should investigate the matter and take action against any one found to have encroached onto state land," he said.

When contacted, Perak Land and Mines Department Director Rumaizi Baharin said the department would check on the matter.

"It is something new to us. We will look into the matter and take action if necessary as in the incident in 2011," Rumaizi said.



An excavator was spotted near the land clearing site at the hill.