



AKHBAR	:	STAR METRO	:	STAR METRO	:	17
TARIKH	:	5/7/2018	:	MUKA SURAT	:	17
JABATAN	:	UMUM	:		:	
KLASIFIKASI	:	PERHATIAN	:		:	

IPOH

By **MANJIT KAUR**
manjit@thestar.com.my

A LACK of funds is hampering plans to refurbish three abandoned government bungalows and one hostel on Taiping's iconic Bukit Larut.

Perak Tourism, Arts and Cultural Committee chairman Tan Kar Hing said the previous Federal Government had approved a RM3mil allocation to improve the facilities and amenities on the hill.

He said repairs for the bungalows and hostel were estimated to cost RM150,000 each.

"The funds have not been disbursed yet, and I will definitely follow up on the issue," Tan said after his first visit to the hill.

He said the hill station, accessible on foot or by four-wheel-drive vehicles, was facing a number of issues, including lack of transportation and accommodation for visitors.

Tan said he would be holding discussions with Taiping Municipal Council and the relevant tourism bodies with the aim of getting proposals from private organisations to develop the hill sustainably.

"Development here does not mean construction of buildings, but to maintain the natural beauty of the hill and at the same time cater to tourists.

"Maybe once the bungalows are repaired, reliable private organisations in the hotel industry can

Efforts to preserve Perak's natural treasures



The view at the top of Bukit Larut in Taiping. The state government is seeking funds for the refurbishment of three bungalows and a hostel on the hill.

manage the facilities better," he said.

While accommodations were a key factor in attracting tourists, he said transportation was also vital.

He said currently there were 10 vehicles for ferrying visitors to the top of the hill, but only six were in working condition.

"Once we get the allocations, there will be a need to get more four-wheel-drive vehicles.

"We also need to think of activities to be organised on the hill, so that tourists will at least stay overnight.

"Currently, people go up the hill for a few hours, look at the scenery and make their way down," he said.

Tan, who also visited the Kampung Dew jetty in Kamunting earlier in the day, said the area famous for fireflies would be gazetted by

the state government before the end of the year.

He said the plan was to gazette a 0.2ha area around the jetty to ensure that the habitat of the fireflies is preserved and protected.

Tan said changes to the size of the area to be gazetted had been made and therefore, a new proposal needed to be approved by the state executive council.

"I was informed that the approval has been given in principle and now we are waiting for the State Economic Planning Unit to submit its plans.

"It should not be a problem for the area to be gazetted by end of the year," he said.

Tan said the state would also enhance enforcement in the area, following rampant encroachment and tree felling over the last decade.

The Drainage and Irrigation Department, Land and Mines Department as well as the Forestry Department, he said, would jointly carry out enforcement in the area.

"We are also looking at plans to further gazette 152ha of a mangrove forest along the Kuala Sepetang River as forest reserve.

"We are hoping to gazette the land owned by the state first, before moving to the privately-owned areas," he said after representatives of environmental groups made the suggestion.

Tan added that the state government would repair a portion of the Kampung Dew jetty's roof that had been damaged by a fallen tree about a week ago.

Besides that, the infrastructure and amenities in the area will also be improved.

Kampung Dew Firefly Tourism Association president Shukor Ishak said encroachment had been taking place along Sungai Sepetang since 2009.

He said certain parties appeared to have plans to create oil palm estates along the river, which the villagers, mostly fishermen, were opposed to.

"With the felling of trees, fireflies will vanish and fishermen will lose a source of income.

"Besides fishing, we earn a living by taking tourists to view fireflies and birds as well as take them to fish for shrimp.

"If the trees are cut, the shrimp which like to hide in the roots of the trees beside the river, will disappear," he said.

Shukor said the association had been asking the state government to gazette the area for a long time.

"It is very difficult to work with certain government agencies as they don't cooperate and the response is always lukewarm.

"I hope better initiatives will now be taken to preserve the area," he added.