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Trampled park

Land clearing to construct an elevated highway is damaging Templer Park, with the planned building of luxury bungalows promising worse to come. Environmental organisations have condemned the two projects and called for them to be scrapped.

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A heritage lost?

Land clearing on the slopes of Templer Park is endangering the once pristine forest and threatening the existence of very rare plants like *hopea subalata* - which is found only in this park - and the serow, a goat-like mammal that is very sensitive to habitat-change.



Templer Park under threat

Rampant logging and development endangering rare wildlife and trees

By **NICHOLAS CHENG** and **NOEL FOO**

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PETALING JAYA: Rampant logging and development are threatening the natural beauty of Templer Park.

The Malaysian Nature Society said it was alarmed over the construction of an elevated highway and the planned building of luxury bungalows in the park.

MNS Selangor branch chairman Henry Goh said approvals for these projects should be retracted because they contradicted the Selangor State Structure Plan and the Selayang Municipal Council Local Plan.

"These projects are completely at odds with

the Government's pledge to hold a moratorium on logging in forest reserves and the promise to consult the public before any development takes place in green areas," he added.

Over 39.44ha of the Kanching Forest Reserve is being cleared for a 60m-high elevated highway called the Rawang Bypass.

It was reported that the federal project, carried out by developer Panzana Enterprise Sdn Bhd, is under the Public Works Department and was approved in 2005.

At the fringe of the reserve, 6.29ha of hillslopes at a private lot near Bukit Takun have been

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approved by the Selayang Municipal Council for the building of 60 luxury bungalows.

Nearby residents said they were told the project would involve clearing Class 3 and 4 hillslopes of 25 degrees and above 35 degrees respectively.

It was reported that only national infrastructure development projects are allowed on such slopes.

The Selangor Government had previously frozen development on such land pending proper guidelines.

Goh said the projects could threaten the "ecological integrity" of the park, which is a water catchment area as well as a natural habitat of rare species of wildlife and trees.

"Studies by MNS reveal that the Rawang Bypass project could affect the rare *Hopea subalata* tree population. Moreover, an investigation by the Wildlife Department on the Bukit Takun housing project confirms that the area designated for development is a natural habitat of an endangered species of serow," he

said.

Forest Research Institute Malaysia botanist Dr Lilian Chua said the *Hopea subalata* was a rare, endemic species found only in the Kanching Forest Reserve.

"*Hopea subalata* is confined to certain parts of the forest reserve and has very low adult population densities. This is reason enough to conserve the area," said Dr Chua in a 2004 paper in the *Journal of Tropical Forest Science*.

Experts believe the bypass project would cut through compartments where *Hopea subalata* was found and estimate a 10% decimation of its population.

World Wildlife Fund Malaysia species conservation manager Dr Han Kwai Hin said the Sumatran serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis*) was a species of goat-like mammal which he estimated to number about 500-750 in the country.

"They are solitary creatures with a low reproductive success rate," he said.

"They are highly sensitive to habitat disturbance, let alone habitat destruction."

