

A hill of light is sadly dimmed

Dato' Dzul kifli Abd Razak

Article

New Sunday Times - 03/13/2005

CAHAYA in English means, "light". The light over a hill called Bukit Cahaya near Seri Alam Agriculture Park, somehow has been dimmed.

What was a lush 886ha area of beautiful piece of natural vegetation suddenly turned barren and ugly. Some argue that this is fated since Bukit Cahaya is another name for Bukit Cerakah, the former being popularised for fear that the latter could be mispronounced as Bukit Celaka.

Ironically, *celaka* which literally means "grave misfortune", now seems more fitting to describe what is left of Bukit Cahaya as a result of utter carelessness.

Sources from the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industries estimated that the park had suffered a RM4.2million environmental carnage, making it prone to flooding in certain areas.

For example, as late as November 2003, there was reportedly a flash flood with water rising up to eight metres, believed to be related to the so called development around its vicinity.

Not surprisingly, the issues surrounding Bukit Cahaya have turned into a national controversy, raising more questions than answers.

Compared to the tsunami-hit areas of Aceh, the balding, of Bukit Cahaya was the work of lesser mortals to whom this planet was "loaned out" to them.

While God through nature has the authority to do what He wants upon His creation, including destroying it, fellow mortals have no such powers.

At least, not in the way Bukit Cahaya was mutilated, making it no less than an act of transgression that only the Creator in His infinite wisdom can forgive.

Thus, although reportedly the individuals and companies allegedly involved will be charged in court soon in connection with the degradation, the penalty for the offence is no more than a fine of up to RM50.000, five years' jail or both.

Can such penalties vindicate the sins purportedly made against nature, particularly from the perspective of suffocating what was regarded as the "oxygen lung" for the Klang Valley, where millions of lives – human, animal and plant – depend upon?

In short, the act is more than just rape: it could be likened to murder, that is, when the ecological "breathing" apparatus has been outrageously destroyed.

The analogy is not an extreme one, because any loss as a result of deforestation is irreplaceable, just as someone that has been brutally murdered, is gone forever.

If only Bukit Cahaya is a person, we would now have "blood" on our hands upon which we have to act.

We have just killed an area that could have been the National Botanical Park by 2007, a pride and joy for many generations to come.

Now this dream can no longer be realised, not in the pristine state at least. And we have shamelessly deprived future generations of their right to share the natural beauty that once was.

Our generation will go down on record as bearers of too many *celaka* in as far as the environment is concerned.

While another ministry wants more control over what is left of Bukit Cahaya, to preserve and protect its natural beauty for future generations, there is no guarantee that this will be the case.

Not until we are convinced that the authorities understand what "sustainable development" means and show both in words and deeds that they are thoroughly committed to its implementation.

Otherwise, chances are it will be mere rhetoric, another one in a long list of empty promises.

Today, Bukit Cahaya stands as a symbol of dashed hopes in as far as environmental preservation is concerned.

The light surrounding it is slowly extinguishing, and the future seems tamer dim, if not totally dark, because we have again failed to reform our exploitative and greedy tendencies.

These tendencies have largely been responsible for the many crimes not only against nature, but also against its Creator.

For this we have to collectively pay a very high price for a life-time just because a handful of those without scruples want to be rich in quick time.

[Terms & Conditions](#)