



Lee says regular exercise is crucial to keep one's fitness level prior to going on a hiking trip. — Photo courtesy of LEE SENG POH

forest," he said.

Lee echoed a similar view, citing his experience when hiking alone in Bukit Saga, Hulu Langat in Selangor, some years ago.

He had gotten lost despite being equipped with a GPS.

"I circled the same area for two hours and it felt like the air was getting heavier.

"It eventually dawned on me that I might have been restrained by something," he said.

When Lee recalled a belief among his relatives that loud

noise could drive away evil spirits, he lit up some firecrackers and was able to 'break free' from the spell and found his way out of the jungle.

As for Francis, he said his wife believed the mongrel they encountered was a spirit.

"As we were exiting the hill, the dog was nowhere to be seen. Other hikers also did not see it," he said.

He had hoped to see the dog again during his subsequent visits to Bukit Gasing, but it was not to be.



The legal trail in Bukit Wawasan is marked with glow stickers, numbers and coloured markers such as the red fabric on a bush (left).

'Stick to marked trail when hiking in Bukit Wawasan'

By **JADE CHAN**
jade@thestar.com.my

BEGINNERS attempting to hike Bukit Wawasan in Puchong, Selangor, should ensure they are well-prepared and equipped, says Wawasan Forest Community (WFC) Society chairman Joe Lim.

"We advise them to bring along walking sticks to support their knees, and water and snacks, as one loop around Bukit Wawasan could take newbies between three and four hours to complete.

"We have had situations where people fainted or had dizzy spells because they were dehydrated or had low blood sugar," he said.

He advised hikers to complete their hike by 6pm, as the forest would get dark early.

Located within the Ayer Hitam Forest Reserve, Bukit Wawasan is the only part of the forest reserve that is accessible to the public.

The 1,182ha forest comes under the purview of the Selangor Forestry Department (JPNS).

Selangor government granted Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) permission to manage and carry out activities related to education, research and forestry development for a 99-year duration until 2095 at the forest reserve.

Lim was speaking to *StarMetro* following its article "Eleven hiking trails are illegal" published on March 4 that mentioned UPM decrying trespassers, unauthorised paths and illegal jungle gym found in the vulnerable forest.

WFC Society is a non-govern-



Lim says the society maintains the forest's legal trail and helps with search-and-rescue efforts in Bukit Wawasan.

mental organisation comprising hiking enthusiasts who volunteer their time to maintain the forest trails and monitor hikers' safety in Bukit Wawasan.

"We work closely with JPNS and UPM on matters related to Bukit Wawasan, such as managing the only hiking trail recognised by the authorities.

"Bukit Wawasan is popular because its hiking trail is good for families and beginners.

"Its peak is 253m high and a complete loop covers 3.8km," said Lim.

"The legal trail is a single trail with two access points (A and B) that lead to the same peak. This trail is marked with glow stickers, numbers and coloured markers," he said of the trail that has its main entrance in Persiaran Bukit.

Lim, a corporate trainer specialising in safety and rescue matters, said WFC Society was often called to assist when hik-

ers got lost.

"Hikers get separated from their group or follow trails that are illegally marked by running groups," he said.

He estimated that over 400 people hiked the hill in the mornings.

"We know several hotspots where people tend to get lost.

"In severe cases where an incident involves broken limbs or someone being stung by a bee, we will call the Fire and Rescue Department and ambulance services for help."

Lim said that some people became lost while looking for a popular waterfall within Bukit Wawasan, known as the Blue Lagoon.

"However, the Blue Lagoon and other trails not marked by WFC Society are illegal.

"If trespassers are caught, JPNS could issue a warning, a warning with a fine, or take them to court," he said.

"Our society has about 10 active members, helped by volunteers, to maintain the hiking trail in Bukit Wawasan.

"We keep the area free of rubbish and big obstacles," he added.

Lim appealed to hikers to stick to the legal trail and for running groups to stop creating new trails.

WFC Society, he said, received funding from Kinrara assemblyman Ng Sze Han and former Selangor tourism committee chairman Hee Loy Sian up until middle of last year.

The NGO chairman said the money was used to buy equipment for maintenance work and to organise events such as talks on first aid and jungle survival.