

# Ayer Hitam 'not a recreational forest'

Hikers can use only specified trail at gazetted site

By **MELIZARANI T. SELVA**  
melizarani@thestar.com.my

AYER Hitam Forest Reserve, also known as Bukit Wawasan, in Puchong, is not a recreational facility.

The forest reserve is owned by Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) for research purposes.

Though this has been highlighted repeatedly in the media, Kinrara assemblyman Ng Sze Han said 86 hikers were recently detained by authorities for trespassing the waterfall area, within the forest during an operation conducted by UPM, the Forestry Department and the police.

"Many hikers, especially outsiders, do not know that Ayer Hitam is not a recreational forest. It is a forest reserve gazetted for UPM staff to do their research and it is considered the university's property.

"UPM and the Forestry Department only allow hikers to hike the specific 2.8km trail and nowhere else.

"It is a 2.8km loop and if you follow it, you will not get lost from the entry point to the exit.

"I urge the public to respect this forest reserve because UPM has been kind to allow Puchong residents to use the trail for exercise," said Ng.

Regular hiker Wong Khoi Seong said he feared the bad behaviour of some hikers would result in UPM withdrawing its goodwill of allowing the public to use the forest trail.

"Many people who are not regular hikers camp overnight in the forest, build fires and litter the area.

"The water at the waterfall is Class 1 and you can drink from the stream, but with people trespassing the area, the water will be contaminated," he said.

Bandar Puteri Puchong 11 Residents Association chairman Alice Choo said her efforts to put up signage to alert the public about the forest's gazetted status was futile.

"We have tried to put up notice boards to warn the public and hikers but they are often removed.

"When fellow hikers and I tried to tell them not to trespass or chop down the trees, they retort with vulgarity.

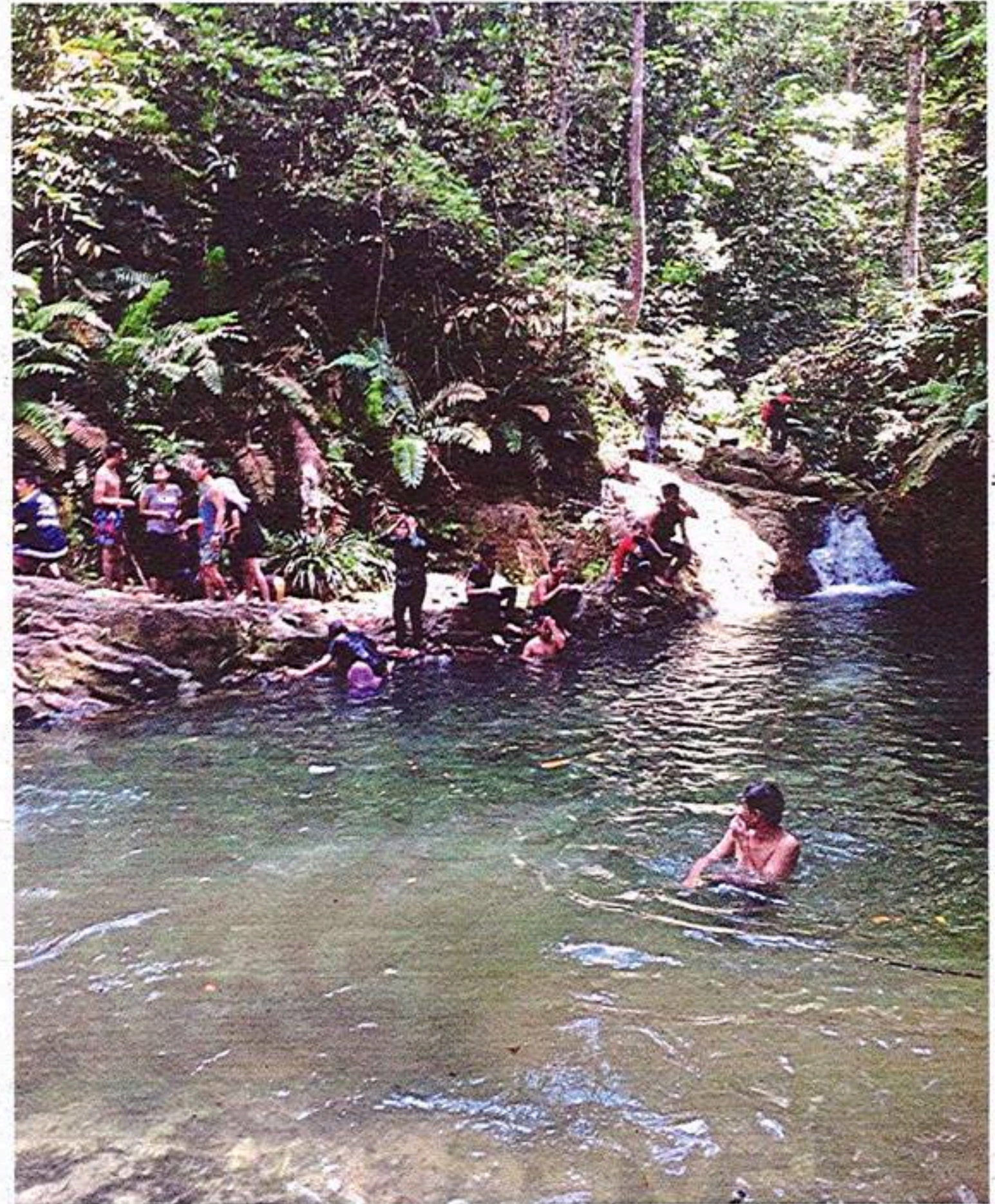
"Some individuals chop branches in the forests to make makeshift stalls. That is a crime," she said.

Taman Tasik Puchong resident of six years, Noor Aini Hassan, said the public should be cautioned of the waterfall.

"The waterfall is very deep and dangerous. The surface seems shallow but once you enter, there are some places where it suddenly gets steep.

"A lot of people frequent Bukit Wawasan on weekends and many of them try to get to the waterfall, which is an extra hour hike from the usual 2.8km route.

"I hope people will be more considerate and I hope UPM will not shut the rule-abiding people off from the trail. It is the only green lung Puchong has," she said.



Members of the public have been spotted at the waterfall in the Ayer Hitam Forest Reserve in Puchong, which is an extra hour's hike from the usual 2.8km trail that hikers can use.