

# Robbed of burial grounds

More than 10 graveyards in Selangor misused

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**A** SUBSTANTIAL number of gazetted Hindu burial grounds in Selangor have been taken up for agriculture and commercial purposes.

It is estimated that more than a quarter of 47 gazetted Hindu burial grounds in the state are affected.

Another puzzling thing about this is, many Hindus are unaware of the existence of such gazetted burial grounds.

This is because, upon being gazetted by the state, the task of managing the plots of land are often awarded to special committees or individuals.

While the majority of caretakers had managed the sites accordingly, *StarMetro* discovered that in many other cases, the sites had been misused.

Following tip-offs from the public, *StarMetro* team checked out gazetted Hindu burial grounds in Kuala Selangor, Rawang, Kuala Langat, Klang and Shah Alam.

The check revealed that many sites had been turned into vegetable farms, flower orchards and even a plantation on a 4.15ha-site at Lot 4469 in Sungai Kelambu in the Kuala Langat district.

A community leader, who declined to be identified, said the plantation was over 30 years old.

He alleged that the status of the land was recently changed from burial to agriculture.

"This is not right," he said, adding that it was unacceptable for gazet-



**No respect:** Selangor Municipal councillor T. Letchimanan (left) and Rawang resident Mahendra Rao looking at an old grave site sitting next to shoplots.

ted burial sites to be taken away to serve the interests of some individuals.

In another instance, a hectare of land identified as Lot 3959, Jalan Haji Sirat Batu 4 off Jalan Kapar, Klang, was gazetted in 1924 as burial site but later degazetted and approved for a hawker centre in 2005.

Following public objections, it is learned that the Menti Besar's Office had directed the Klang Municipal Council to re-gazette the land as a burial site.

In a letter dated Dec 2, 2008, the MB ordered that all illegal buildings that existed on the land to be demolished and the status of the land to be re-gazetted as a burial site.

However, checks revealed that a sawmill was illegally operating at the site.

It was also discovered that two sites at Jalan Keretapi Lama

(renamed Jalan Merbau) in Klang, measuring 1.25ha and 1.5ha, were also turned into plantations.

The sites were gazetted as burial ground in 1933.

In Rawang, residents claim that a few blocks of shops stand on a 10.8ha land meant to be a Hindu burial ground.

The land that was initially gazetted in 1911 as a burial ground, was changed in 1978 to be used for public facilities, but the shoplots were built instead and no other land was given as replacement.

Malaysian Indian Burial Site Management Association chairman M. M. Raman said he was caught by surprise when he first saw the list of 47 Hindu burials grounds that had been reserved by the state.

He said he was given a list of gazetted burial sites when he submitted a proposal to the state government to have more Hindu burial

sites.

"I was shocked when I was told that so many sites had been allocated for burial.

"However, further checks revealed that many of the sites had been misused by individuals who were given the authority to manage it," he said.

Raman said that many Hindus still bury their dead, so land was needed for the purpose.

He said the lack of a state body to manage the Hindu burial sites had created room for wrongdoing.

He, however, said the Hindu Endowment Board in Penang was doing a good job.

"It is responsible to supervise and manage all burial grounds and Hindu temples.

"If it is done this way, we will not face the complex situation like in Selangor where irresponsible individuals are profiting from sites meant to be burial ground," he said.