



KERATAN AKHBAR

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ILLEGAL LAND ENCROACHMENT

Cameron's farmers have to move out by today

KUANTAN: Farmers operating along Sungai Ichat in Kuala Terla, Cameron Highlands, are racing against time to clear out their farming equipment by today.

The 60 farmers, whose small-holdings were demolished under Op Lestari 2 to curb illegal land encroachment, were given some breathing space after the authorities decided to stop operations for three days starting on Friday.

Farmer T. Ramachandran, who used to operate a 2.4ha vegetable and chrysanthemum flower farm in Kuala Terla, said he was moving out his farming tools and salvaging his harvest.

"The three-day period is too short for us to remove all our belongings. We need at least two weeks to harvest the vegetables and flowers."

On what he planned to do with his farming tools, the 45-year-old said the equipment would be left unused at his house as he no longer had land to work on.

Another farmer, who gave his name only as Mahendran, said it was a bitter end for the farming community in Kuala Terla.

The 60-year-old said some farmers had decided to sell their equipment, while others were



contemplating moving elsewhere to start a new life.

"We hope the state government will offer us an alternative site so that we can continue to put our farming skills to good use.

"We have been working on the farms here for generations. It is tough to leave.

"People are saying we are being emotional, but farming is in our

blood. Both the old and young will have a story to tell about farming in Kuala Terla," he said, adding that he was considering moving and staying with his children elsewhere.

On Friday, Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Wan Rosdy Wan Ismail said the affected farmers would be given time to dismantle their equipment and harvest

their crops.

He said the farmers had been given a lot of time to vacate, but failed to do so.

Last week, state MIC chief V. Arumugam reportedly said MIC had gone to Kuala Terla on Dec 23 (the first day of Op Lestari 2) hoping that the farmers could get an extension to harvest their vegetables, fruits and flowers.

Enforcement officers carrying out an operation to curb illegal land encroachment under Op Lestari 2 at Sungai Ichat in Kuala Terla, Cameron Highlands, on Tuesday. PIC COURTESY OF CAMERON HIGHLANDS FARMER