

Headline	Camerons land grabbers make fierce comeback		
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Camerons land grabbers make fierce comeback

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TANAH RATA — Illegal settlers encroaching on land in Cameron Highlands are back — now joined by mobs who threaten enforcement officers with blowpipes and bottles.

National Security Council secretary Datuk Seri Alias Ahmad said the second phase of Ops Gading — an operation to uncover encroachment of land at the highlands — had been marred by threats of violence against the enforcement team.

The second phase of the operation started on March 3.

“We have received complaints where bottles were hurled at our officers, while some of the enforcement personnel were threatened with blowpipes,” he said.

He added the council had discovered eight areas where farmers re-encroached on land which they had previously used for agriculture. The eight areas comprise two in Sungai Mansion, four in Ringlet and one each in Kampung Raja and Bertam Valley.

“Another three new sites, totalling 7.28ha of land in Blue Valley and Bertam Valley, have been freshly encroached.”

Alias, however, said the authorities had yet to arrest the perpetrators of the recent land-grabbing activities.

“Whenever the enforcement team visits the area, those responsible are no where in

sight. We suspect they are being tipped off by informers.

“We have to change our strategy,” he added, after chairing an Ops Gading technical committee meeting here yesterday.

Despite the challenges, Alias said the operation would continue as encroachment in Cameron Highlands “was an issue of national importance”.

“We view such land-grabbing activities seriously as Cameron Highlands is well-known for its greenery. It is important we maintain its image.”

Alias said Tenaga Nasional Berhad would cut off power supply to farms where farmers had ventured beyond their lands.

“We will also ask the Malaysian Companies Commission to blacklist foreign companies financing these farms.

“Also, the board of the directors for these companies should not be allowed in the country.”

Alias said phase one of Ops Gading had recorded 84 encroachment cases. Two individuals were charged in court and fined RM10,000 each. Investigations were still ongoing for the other cases.

He said the Department of Environment was also scrutinising those who had encroached river reserves.