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# A desolate sanctuary

## Wetlands remains a white elephant despite massive upgrade

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**M**ORE needs to be done to keep the Paya Indah Wetlands Sanctuary in Dengkil appealing and meet its objective of being a tourist attraction.

The relaunches are not having the desired effect of drawing the crowd.

The park has opened and closed on three occasions since the Federal Government first launched it in October 2001. The RM160mil mega project meant for nature conservation has failed to attract visitors and is a forlorn sight.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Douglas Unggah Embas in October last year relaunched the wetlands and this coincided with the opening of the National Environment Week from Oct 21 to 27.

There was so much of hype and the minister had said that RM9mil had been allocated under the Ninth Malaysia Plan for the park, now under the management of the Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan).

Douglas even released 53 water birds but nothing much has been done since then.

»I am unable to comment as such matters are best referred to Perhilitan«

SALMAN SAABAN

Currently, apart from the three hippopotamus presented by the Botswana government, the wetland sanctuary covering an area of 3,300ha is a white elephant.

A visit to the Wetland Sanctuary recently found everything at a standstill.

There are clusters of new buildings coming up at a snail's pace.

When asked to comment on the progress, park superintendent Salman Saaban said: "I am unable to comment as such matters are best referred to Perhilitan."

Salman had said in October last year that once the park reopened, the focus would be on conservation and research. He had also said that some of the threats faced by Paya Indah include the clearing of the forests nearby for housing and the dip in the water level within the water cells.

However, there seems to be so much yet to be done and the sanctuary might as well

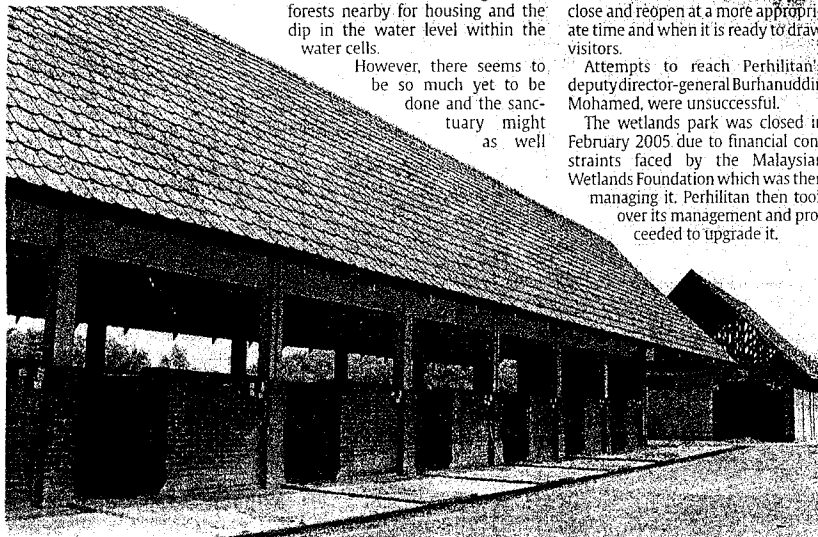


**Deserted:** The parking lot at Paya Indah Wetlands in Dengkil.

close and reopen at a more appropriate time and when it is ready to draw visitors.

Attempts to reach Perhilitan's deputy director-general Burhanuddin Mohamed, were unsuccessful.

The wetlands park was closed in February 2005 due to financial constraints faced by the Malaysian Wetlands Foundation which was then managing it. Perhilitan then took over its management and proceeded to upgrade it.



**No horses:** The stables lying empty at the sanctuary.



**Pretty sight:** Ducks taking shelter under some shady trees at the wetlands.



**Attractive chalets:** The accommodation for visitors is underused.