

DSI steps in over Phuket protected forest land spat

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PHUKET: The Department of Special Investigation has accepted complaints of encroachment into the Bang Khanun National Reserved Forest near Thalang Technical College and will investigate the encroachment as a special case.



DSI investigators are now pursuing any illegal encroachment into the protected national forest near the airport. Photo: DSI

The DSI began its preliminary investigation into the disputed land claims [in September last year](#) following a request by Thalang Technical College Director Kochakorn Butsaraporn and Deputy Director Kanchana Tantharawatphan.

DSI Deputy Chief Pol Lt-Colonel Kornwat Panprapakorn assigned Special Case Inquiry officer Pattarapol Jewnongpo and Jedtana Hemmun, Director Intelligence and Crime Information Analysis Division at the Bureau of Technology and Information Inspection Center, to investigate the attempted land grab

The Royal Forest Department granted permission to use the land – 142 Rai 1 Ngan 47 talang wah within the boundaries of the Suan Pa Bang Khanun protected forest area – to establish the Phuket Technical College through a Cabinet Resolution in 1997, Ms Kanchana explained.

The land in question was later designated to establish Thalang Technical College, she said.

Only about 40 rai of the land granted is currently occupied by the college. The remaining 100 rai was left for future expansion, Mr Jedtana said.

However, someone had now sectioned off the remaining 100 rai by installing cement posts as a boundary in an attempt to claim it, he said.

By [November last year](#), the DSI investigators had found discrepancies between the land the Thalang Technical College is currently occupying and the land it claims it has rights to for its expansion, compared with the land it is entitled to occupy.

In its latest report released on Tuesday (Sept 28), the DSI reported that the area in question, near Thalang technical College on the road leading to Phuket International Airport, was declared a national forest reserve after the Department of Vocational Education (now called the Office of Vocational Education Commission) was granted permission from the Royal Forest Department to use the area in the Bang Khanun National Forest Reserve to establish the second Phuket Technical College.

The land use was conferred by the signing of a memorandum acknowledging and certifying that it will comply with the conditions attached to the announcement of the Royal Forest Department on April 8, 1997, the report noted.

The college had already set up boundaries to install barbed wire fences on all four sides in April 2020, following a survey of the area, the report added.

A check of land holdings by people in the Bang Khanun National Reserved Forest found that there are 265 people who have rights to and use the forest area, totaling 310 plots, with an area of more than 2,698 rai, the report said.

“Those occupying land within the forest boundaries used the land for the cultivation of rubber, oil palm and various kinds of fruits,” the report noted.

However, the report also noted, “All citizens have occupied the forest area after the declaration of state land, which means the area encroached on is in a national forest reserve and a forest park, which is public domain land.”

The forest area in question is watershed forest, a fertile forest, said the report.

“There are large trees scattered all over the area, such as Yang Thong [‘golden rubber trees’], Loom Por [Ipil, also called Borneo teak], revered Boon Nak trees [Mesua Ferrea Ironwood], Takien Thong [Thai teak], Takien Hin [Hopea ferrea], Yang Na [resin tree, which grows to heights of about 50 metres] and Sator trees,” the report noted.

“The surrounding landscape can be clearly seen, such as Phuket International Airport, the Andaman Sea, etc,” it added.

“The Department of Special Investigation has considered that such behavior may be considered an invasion, occupying and possession of Bang Khanun National Reserved Forest and state land according to the Forest Act 1941, the National Reserved Forest Act 1964 and the Land Code that has or may have a severe impact on public order and good moral, and affect the environment and important national resources,” the report said.

The report did note that the special case was “complicated”.

“It is necessary to use special investigative methods and collect evidence according to the Special Investigation Act B.E. 2547 and its amendments, and in accordance with the details of the nature of the offense as prescribed in the notification of the Special Case Committee under the NEC Notification (No. 7) B.E. 1) of the Special Investigation Act BE 2547,” the report acknowledged.

“The Director-General of the Department of Special Investigation has ordered that the matter be treated as a special case in order to investigate and prove any guilt in order to bring offenders to face further legal proceedings,” the report concluded.

Source:<https://www.thep Phuket news.com/dsi-steps-in-over-phuket-protected-forest-land-spat-81564.php>