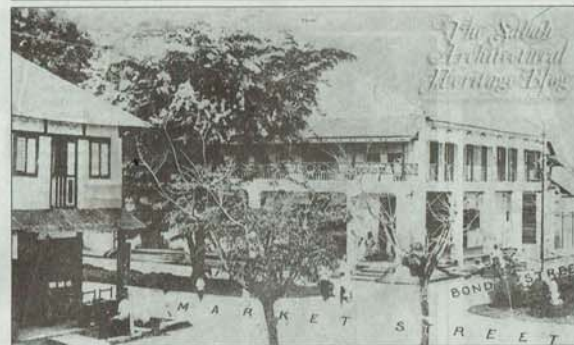


Headline	Protecting our heritage trees		
MediaTitle	Daily Express (KK)		
Date	09 Jun 2019	Color	Full Color
Section	Special Report	Circulation	25,055
Page No	9,10	Readership	75,165
Language	English	ArticleSize	2692 cm ²
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Shophouses in Jesselton Township (c. 1930s).



Life in Jesselton in the 1930s. Note the trees.

Sidney Skinner

THERE are about 100 trees in Kota Kinabalu alone, including the rainforest tree outside Wisma Muis in Sembulan, which have been accorded "heritage" status.

Their worth has been put at several hundred thousand ringgit, especially if they are rainforest over 100 years old.

The State Local Government, Housing and Urban Well-being Ministry's guidelines are adhered to when it came to deciding which trees were worthy of this status.

Such trees are generally over three decades old, with a trunk measuring more than 18cm in diameter. "They can be of an indigenous or exotic variety and either have been planted by dignitaries or have economic value," said a City Hall source. Preservation efforts were enacted on "heritage trees" once every six months.

"Our arborist checks on the well-being of each tree, including signs that they may have been damaged."

The agency preferred tree species which were "huge and shady" over those which were ornamental.

Asked if City Hall had stopped planting rainforest trees around the State Capital, he said this was not so. It was more a case of identifying suitable locations to grow such trees.

"Space constraints prevent us from planting most of these trees."

City Hall welcomed tree-planting efforts by the community, including private corporations.

"They should consult us for information on the guide-lines for such activities and are free to source these trees from the nursery of their choice," the source said.

The agency recently condoned off the rainforest tree in Sembulan and some others along the main road opposite the City Mosque in Kg Likas in a bid to prevent this greenery from being vandalised.

The spokesman said these trees had been put behind a barricade to better protect them. Such efforts were warranted, as these trees deserved to be better appreciated.

"We are conscious of the fact that the trees may have been planted decades ago as they tower over the other greenery nearby."

He said City Hall wanted to remind the public of this by sectioning of the trees.

"A chain-link fence has been erected around a giant rainforest tree in Sembulan after we discovered that mischief-makers had tried to set fire to the trunk," the source said.

"We applied some white-paint to a row of trees in Kg Likas and placed a



Heritage trees marked with white paint opposite Likas mosque.

make-shift fence around them, after it came to our attention that they had been vandalised."

The paint used is not harmful to the trees. Some of the tree trunks appeared to have been hacked with a sharp implement like a chopper or axe. Strips of bark have been removed from others.

"Not only are they objects of natural beauty but they also help to purify the surrounding environment by pumping oxygen into the air," said a Daily Express reader.

He wondered if the guilty parties might somehow be trying to kill the trees

so that they could get at the hard wood.

"I cannot understand why City Hall has turned a blind eye to the condition of this greenery," he said.

"The State Capital cannot be considered a rainforest city if it cannot keep such trees alive," he said.

In the Klang Valley in the Peninsula, arborists have called for local authorities to record and protect old trees.

They lament that the Klang Valley, despite being the location of the capital city, has not shown the appropriate care towards these green gems.

A quick glance at the efforts of other

It is said that the raintrees were planted in all the British colonies for the shade they provide from the tropical heat as well as to serve as a gathering point for locals to conduct trade (tamus). Often, these spots also provided a perfect opportunity for the administration to gather information on what is happening in the interior such as signs of unrest.

Some of the oldest trees in Kota Kinabalu are at the Muis complex. (pic: MyS-abah)



cities towards treasuring heritage trees reveals how far we are lagging behind in this aspect.

A heritage tree refers to one with significant value typically in terms of age, size, related event or unique location, and is considered irreplaceable.

In Portland, the city council recognises "trees of unique size, age, historical or horticultural significance" as heritage trees. They are listed in database and designated with plaques, and cannot be removed without consent from relevant authorities.

In Greater Manchester in the United Kingdom, there is a heritage tree project to celebrate, record and protect trees, under its City of Trees movement.

The public are encouraged to not just identify heritage trees, but also to share their memories of them.

Singapore protects mature trees from its rapid development with the Heritage Tree Scheme introduced in 2001, which invites nominations from the public and gives all the necessary care to ensure the trees' well-being.

To-date, 260 trees have been included in Singapore's Heritage Tree Register.

The island's Connaught Drive lined with 22 majestic rain trees is celebrated as the "Avenue of Heritage Trees".

In the Klang Valley, trees are downed without much thought.

Try to recall how many places were once nicknamed "Big Tree" for having such landmarks, sadly, these trees are

nowhere to be seen now.

Such danger prompts several senior arborists to call for action from local councils while urging the public and corporations to preserve heritage trees in their midst.

Arborist Rosslan Yaacob showed StarMetro several trees in town that deserved to be recognised as heritage trees, and needed urgent care.

"Currently in Malaysia, we do not have standard criteria for heritage tree, nor a register and planting records of old trees, making things difficult."

"The only way to tell the value of the tree now is by the size; the bigger one is older and higher in value," he said, but commended Kuala Lumpur City Hall for giving more attention to the concern in recent years.

He pointed out that arborists endeavoured to better protect mature trees by highlighting their economic values through the Thyre Method, which would take into account the social, environmental and health (physical) factors of the tree.

Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) senior research officer Adnan Mohammad said highlighting the value of a tree in dollars and cents helped create better awareness of its preservation to a certain extent. However, he stressed that more needed to be done to acknowledge them as heritage trees.

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Believed to be the last remaining raintree along Gaya Street that was grown before the war by the colonial government to provide shade.



The majestic raintree in Donggongan that has become a landmark in the area.

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The 100-year-old raintree in Ipoh was relocated to make way for two new school blocks. Pic shows the chopped branches.

Landmarks: Why large trees shouldn't be cut

From Page 9

"Large trees are often landmarks of a town and should not be simply chopped down, they are our heritage as they signify the years the place has been through," he said.

He noted that Section 35A of the Town and Country Planning Act stated that the Tree Preservation Order that would give the local planning authority the power to prevent the felling of any tree or trees, but the clause was not used often enough.

He said local councils should take the lead in registering heritage trees and setting regulations to protect them, but sadly, most cities in the country rather sacrificed precious huge trees due to lack of awareness.

Efforts by the authorities in Taiping, Kuala Kangsar, Penang and Melaka in preserving heritage trees should be emulated by other city administrations.

"Quite a number of city councils have a trees information system but, do they really put in the data?" he asked.

Both arborists reiterated the importance of maintaining these old trees professionally because they were often under high stress in the polluted urban setting.

They also suggested ways to educate the public on heritage trees, among them to work with tour guides to share about their wonders.

"Sometimes, people are too sensitive about trees thinking that they may topple easily but in fact, the trees will not be dangerous as long as the local authority

engages the right people to inspect and monitor," Adnan said.

"If City Hall just chops down trees whenever the public pressures them, then Kuala Lumpur will lose out a lot in the long run," he added.

The forest is a man-made wonder conceived under the British, way back in 1927. Who would have thought that the breathtaking green gem was once a barren, abandoned mining land.

Hence, it is only deserving that FRIM was nominated as a Unesco Heritage Site in July, alongside Royal Belum State Park in Perak and the Quartz Ridge of Gombak in Selangor.

It is said to be the biggest and oldest man-made tropical forest in the world.

FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod initiated the push for world heritage status since 2008; the forest gained the National Heritage status in 2012.

Roslan first highlighted an epic tree standing in front of Menara IMC. "This tree's economic value is estimated to be RM1.mil," he said, adding that he was shown a photo of the tree taken in 1960s, but it could well be a century old.

"Even if we do not put it in dollars and cents, this tree can just take our breath away with its lush canopy and ample girls."

"So many tourists disembarking here for Concorde Hotel were in awe when they saw this tree!"

"This tree has the potential to become our Heritage Tree" he enthused.

Menara IMC's assistant building manager Raingit Singh said not just the employees here, even the headquarters in Hong Kong were proud of the tree.

"Employees take it upon themselves to guard the tree from vandalism and littering, it is like a pillar of our company," he said.

The company foots the tree's maintenance costs and recently paid RM25,000 for two sessions to treat its dead branches and other health concerns.

There is something as imposing as the KL Tower within the compound of this national landmark - a Jelutong tree close to 100 years old.

It is learned that an extra RM30,000 was spent on the tower's construction in order to preserve this tree.

Not only was the tower's position shifted to avoid it, extra reinforcing measures were used to protect it during construction.

Roslan noted that the Jelutong produced white latex used for making chewing gum, and the drops of exudate on its trunk would be interesting sights for city dwellers.

While the Jelutong tree is next to the Bukit Nanas Forest Reserve that has kept trees as old, but it is extra unique because of its visibility and the efforts put in to conserve it, Roslan explained.

The two lush rain trees standing among the country's historical landmarks must have been witness to so many significant moments, but sadly no written record or old photo of them is found yet.

"Not many would think of jotting down the date when they plant a tree, as the significance is only seen decades later," Roslan said.

Nevertheless, these two trees with stunning crowns are easily over 90 years old, he said.

"Being situated amid national icons is another unique aspect of these two trees."

"They also show that trees are important elements in the whole tapestry of our city and should therefore be recognised, respected and handled with care," he added.

— FRIM senior research officer



'There is something as imposing as the KL Tower within the compound of this national landmark - a Jelutong tree close to 100 years old.' (pic: TianChad.com)