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NEGRI SEMBILAN'S FIRST RUBBER TREE

# 100-YEAR-OLD TREE STILL OOZING LATEX

Seed of 25m tall rubber tree near Seremban Lake Gardens believed to be one of 22 brought to Malaysia from Kew Gardens, England, in 1877



The century old rubber tree in Jalan Keliling near the Seremban Lake Gardens is estimated to be worth RM3.8 million. PIC BY HASRIYASYAH SABUDIN

NUR AQIDAH AZIZI  
SEREMBAN  
nur@nst.com.my

**A** 25-METRE tall rubber tree in Jalan Keliling near Seremban Lake Gardens, has been attracting curious passers-by and residents, following reports that it still produces latex.

It started two years ago when the Seremban Municipal Council (SMC) erected a fence around the tree, with the signage "Negri Sembilan's First Rubber Tree".

SMC Public Relations Department unit head Shamaruddin Saidin said the rubber tree, *Hevea brasiliensis*, was planted at the site in 1877.

"It can still produce latex, like the one in Kuala Kangsar, Perak.

We found out about this after an SMC worker who was clearing the area saw latex oozing from the tree.

"Interestingly, based on the formula issued by the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM), assessments of aspects, including age and current prices, indicate the tree is worth RM3.8 million.

"Given that the tree has a high aesthetic value we have fenced it off to prevent it from being targeted by irresponsible parties."

Shamaruddin said SMC conducted a detailed study on the tree and found that it was more than 100 years old.

"There are a lot of big, old trees in the area, but we did not know that this rubber tree has a long history and significant value."

He said it was believed that the tree's seed was among the 22 that were brought into the country from Kew Gardens, England, in 1877.

He said 11 seeds were planted in Singapore's Botanic Gardens, nine in Kuala Kangsar and one each in Seremban and Melaka.

"The rubber seed was planted in front of the former British resident's official residence, opposite the golf course.

"The authorities wanted to see whether it was suitable to plant rubber trees here."

Shamaruddin said the success of the project led to the opening of the first rubber plantation in Linsum Rantau near here.

He added that the 647ha estate was opened by Thomas H. Hill in 1883.

"Negri Sembilan was one of three Federated Malay States, besides Perak and Selangor, where rubber plants had shown positive growth.

"By 1920, Malaya was producing more than half of the world's rubber yield. Even today, rubber is an important crop in the region."

Shamaruddin said the history of rubber plantations in the country should be preserved so that future generations would be aware of its existence.

"This particular rubber tree has become a tourist attraction in the state. The locals take a closer look at the tree every time they pass by."

He said the area would be maintained by the council's Department of Parks and Landscapes to ensure the tree was kept in good condition.