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## TREASURES

# PROTECT OUR ROADSIDE TREES

I AM truly aghast, ashamed and disappointed with the way certain Majlis Bandaraya (Town Councils), specifically Majlis Bandaraya Selayang and Gombak, treat roadside trees.

Late last year, they felled at least 10 beautiful *Khaya ivorensis* trees along the road en route to the Gombak-Batu Caves junction.

Recently, I noticed a row of at least 15 trees had been felled or about to be felled near Selayang Hospital.

The crowns had been chopped off and only one low stump remained!

Urban roadside trees have important functions such as:

**ABSORBING** carbon dioxide and producing oxygen. We all know that humans produce carbon dioxide when we breathe and need oxygen to live.

There is a symbiotic relationship between human beings and trees (all plants as well);

**PROVIDING** shade in this hot and humid tropical climate;

**SIGNIFICANTLY** reducing the ambient temperature of the surroundings; and,

**ENRICHING** the soil.

Malaysia is short of timber supply. Even rubber wood is now imported from neighbouring countries. *Khaya ivorensis* are beautiful trees with spreading crowns and they are a joy to see.

The timber of *Khaya ivorensis* is a beautiful, medium-density hardwood. It is red and excellent for furniture, flooring and panelling, as long as it is under shade and not treated.

*Khaya ivorensis* is called African mahogany and is a valued tree in Africa, where even the leaves and bark are used for medicinal purposes.

Thus, the wanton destruction of these beautiful trees, some exceeding one metre in diameter at the base, is a real shame. The authorities must be held responsible for what I consider an irresponsible act.

To protect the trees it is important

to know how to manage them:

**THEY** can be pruned if the crowns are too large and have the tendency to fall;

**THEY** can be pollarded by removing lower branches to allow the growth of new branches;

**THE** "Tanam, Tinggal dan Tuai" (Plant, Leave and Harvest) practice must be discarded; and,

**SEEK** advice on tree management from trained arborists and foresters.

On the issue of the felled trees — to add insult to injury — the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM), the top tropical forest research institute in the world, is hardly 3km from Selayang Hospital and 6km from Gombak.

FRIM has all the expertise in tree management and wood utilisation. FRIM has a research sawmill and plywood machines for peeling timbers.

I am not sure what the authorities did with the timber, but based on what I saw in Gombak, they cut the trees into small pieces and the labourers who



A row of felled trees near Selayang Hospital in Kuala Lumpur. PIC COURTESY OF WRITER

were felling the trees in Gombak told me that they threw them away.

What a waste! FRIM would have loved to have the logs for research or converted into useful planks, at least. Even the branches can be used.

I am not sure if such irresponsible practices happen in other municipali-

ties in the country. To me, these trees are treasures to be protected.

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