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Soil dumped on tree roots now removed

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - The soil dumped on the roots of the raintrees (samanea saman) and mahogany (swietenia) on a plot of land next to a sewerage pipe-laying project in Jalan Tun Razak has been removed.

Project developer Setegap Berhad said this was to prevent further damage to the roots. Project manager Ong Kim Pong said the soil was moved away from the trees yesterday morning.

"The soil is still left on the plot of land but it has been removed from the tree roots," he said, adding that the soil would be used to cover the sewerage pipes once they are in place.

Asked whether the trees would be felled, Ong said no. "They will just be left the way they are."

Ong added that it will be a while before the sewerage pipe-laying project was completed.

The once lush three-hectare plot has been turned into a dumping site for earth removed from the project, and several trees have shown signs of dying.

On Tuesday, Associate Professor Dr George Ong of Universiti Malaya's Department of Botany said the trees would die within a month if nothing was done to curb damage to the roots.

This, he said, was because earth from the construction area, which had been dumped on the tree roots, was depriving it of oxygen.

If the trees continued to wither despite the soil being removed from their roots, it will be a tragic end for them, especially after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad galvanised an ambitious Nationwide Tree Planting Programme on March 3 with the goal of planting three million trees by 2000 and another 20 million by 2020.

Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu pledged shortly after that 72 trees, ironically also along Jalan Tun Razak, would not be destroyed even though they stood in the way of a RM1.2 billion highway project linking the city centre, Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

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