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Trees along Jalan Tun Razak to stay

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The 10 raintrees (samanea saman) and mahogany (swietenia) along Jalan Tun Razak which were under threat from sewerage pipe laying works will not be felled, contractor Setegap Bhd said today.

Its project manager, Ong Kim Pong said the soil previously covering the roots of the trees had been removed to cover the sewerage pipes while the earthwork was temporary and was due for completion soon.

"The decision was reached out of awareness. We were not under pressure from the authorities.

"We have never received any notice from City Hall or any Government agency telling us not to fell the trees," he said.

On May 21, the New Straits Times reported the slow death of the trees following the conversion of the once lush three-hectare plot into a dump site for earth removed during the project.

If they had to be felled, it will indeed be a sad end for these majestic trees, 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 the highway project.

The raintrees and mahogany in the area are about 60 years old.

Assoc Prof Dr George Ong from Universiti Malaya's Botany Department had also expressed optimism that the trees would survive the ordeal if fresh water and oxygen were channeled to their roots.

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