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Report-Trees  
PLANT A TREE AS A LIVING GIFT TO THE NATION

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KUALA LUMPUR: Once a commercial outpost for the tin mining industry, Kuala Lumpur has bloomed into a swank and modern city replete with a number of appealing skyscrapers.

During this transformation the greenery gradually disappeared, replaced by the ever expanding concrete jungle.

And in recent years, many of the playing fields that provided the "lungs" for the city and venues for recreation were also lost to development.

Recognising the importance of the greenery, meaning trees, to an urban environment, several agencies, corporations and non-governmental organisations as well as citizens have taken up the cause to plant more trees as a living gift to the nation and mother earth.

One such greening mission was launched by BP Malaysia Sdn Bhd, with the cooperation of the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM), under its "Adopt A Tree" project.

At the launching of the project by Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding, BP said its objective was to create environmental awareness among Malaysians.

According to a FRIM research officer, Dr Aminah Hamzah, greening the city is encouraged not only for beautification purposes but also because plants freshen the atmosphere by removing dust and other pollutants besides replenishing oxygen in the air.

She says everyone, even flat-dwellers, should plant trees or shrubs and this project gives them a chance to do so. Local plants can be redeemed at FRIM with coupons distributed by 65 participating BP service stations in the Klang Valley.

The coupons come in a booklet which also contain an outline of the general principles for tree planting and care.

The seedlings handed out are indigenous trees, be they for shade or ornamental purposes.

FRIM advises those who live in flats to plant palms in pots and dwellers of terrace houses to grow small trees or palms.

"The programme is also educational as it exposes Malaysians to our local trees like the 'pulai' (alstonia angustifolia), 'merawan bunga' (hopea pubescens) and '"sentang' (adzadiracta pavovina), among others.

"We must plant indigenous trees to reflect the uniqueness of our forest heritage," she says, expressing disappointment with costly imported trees that line certain roads in the Klang Valley.

Whenever an opportunity arises, Dr Aminah never fails to propound the need to plant indigenous trees, especially to landscape architects who were trained abroad with a bias for foreign plants.

Dr Aminah, who coaxes plants to grow by talking to them, says that 15,000 coupons were printed but only 4,000 were redeemed so far for plant seedlings of various species from FRIM's nursery.

She is urging those who had taken the coupons to collect their seedlings for the greening project before the deadline in March next year.

Under the project BP had also planted trees at selected BP service stations and some schools in the Klang Valley.

The other body undertaking tree planting actively is the Malaysian Nature Society Tree Planting Group (MNS-TPG).

This ongoing programme is in response to the Prime Minister Datuk Seri

Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call to "Green the Nation" a few years ago, MNS-TPG project coordinator Andrew Sebastian says.

To broaden the work of tree planting, the MNS had signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Real Estate Federation (FIABCI), Persatuan Penilai dan Perunding Harta Swasta Malaysia (PEPS), the Lions Club, OneEarth Enterprise and FRIM in September 1995.

The pact calls for the cooperation among the signatories to promote the planting of trees through a tree donation programme, Sebastian explains.

"It works this way -- the TPG accepts pledges of tree donations at a cost of RM100 each to be planted in various parks and recreational areas, along roads and river reserves all over Malaysia," he says.

Anyone can donate a tree or trees and the MNS will maintain the record of each precious tree which may be a gift to commemorate significant occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries or marriages, among others.

As of October this year, 1,947 trees had been planted at the Kelana Jaya recreational park, Kuala Selangor Nature Park and Universiti Utara Malaysia, among others. One of the most recent tree planting project was undertaken at the Bukit Jalil Hockey Stadium compound to mark the 16th Commonwealth Games.

"The planting of a tree is a true gift of recognition or affection for someone or in remembrance of an eventful occasion," Sebastian says.

It is also healing nature for mankind's wanton desecration of the environment.

-- BERNAMA

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