

Don't go on tree-felling spree, eco warriors tell authorities

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PETALING JAYA: The erratic weather has seen incidences of trees falling recently, but that does not grant the authorities a free pass to go on a “tree-felling” spree, say NGOs and environmentalists.

Instead, the authorities should plant types of trees according to the location as well as ensuring their timely maintenance, the groups said.

Malaysian Nature Society president Vincent Chow said suitability of trees should be considered for urban spaces and roadsides.

“Big trees like the angšana tree are not suitable at the roadside.

“Suitability of the species and the location are aspects that we should look into,” he said.

According to Chow, the authorities should conduct a thorough study before planting trees at an area, and also ensure proper tree management procedures are in place.

“Trees not being maintained or pruned properly is happening across Malaysia. This neglect of trees is what we have to look into,” he added.

Sahabat Alam Malaysia president Meenakshi Raman said while it backs Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim’s call to plant 100 trees for each felled in the city, it is also crucial to protect the trees by having proper management plans.

“We support the call by the PM but we are concerned that due to recent incidences, there would be a tree-cutting spree. It’s important to protect the trees; they don’t simply die or their roots become rotten. If in the course of con-



Think before acting: Several accidents involving trees tumbling down in inclement weather have been recorded in a few states since April 4. Despite that, eco warriors say the authorities should not go on a ‘tree-felling’ spree but should plant suitable trees according to the location instead. — Bernama

struction, the roots of the trees are affected, then this could affect the health of trees.

“Hence, it is vital to have proper plans to preserve the trees and not take short cuts which kill the trees,” she said.

Meenakshi said the replanting of trees can be done with proper plans and consultations with experts and arborists, adding that under the Town and Country Planning Act 1976, there are provisions for the protection and preservation of trees by the local authorities.

The current approach of prioritising construction over “green

spaces” must stop as it is crucial to have more trees in cities due to extreme heat and rainfall, she noted.

“We need to heed the call made (by the PM) and ensure local authorities involve the public to make sure that the plans are implemented,” she added.

Meenakshi also said it is important to educate construction companies and developers on how to protect and preserve trees.

The Consumers Association of Penang president Mohideen Abdul Kader said urban roadside trees are now mostly surrounded by impervious pavements, which

contribute to poor growth and health of tree roots.

“Mature trees require frequent monitoring by arborists and care by the local authorities,” he said.

He also called on the authorities to determine suitable locations for planting new trees by considering factors such as space and soil quality.

“Species selection is also important by prioritising the native species that provide ecosystem benefits such as shade, carbon sequestration and air purification.

“Monitoring programmes need to be done to ensure the progress of tree-planting efforts and the

compliance with tree-planting requirements,” he said.

Mohideen also proposed for local planning authorities to create a tree preservation order under the Act.

Anwar had made the “plant 100 trees” call after Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Federal Territories) Dr Zaliha Mustafa, in the wake of yet another huge tree that toppled onto a road in the capital city, said the Kuala Lumpur City Council (DBKL) had been instructed to promptly fell trees at risk of falling down.

The incident was the latest in a spate of trees tumbling down in inclement weather.

On May 14, two stalls at a night market in Nilai, Negri Sembilan, were damaged when a tree was uprooted after heavy rain in the evening.

On May 13, several cars were struck by fallen trees in Kuala Lumpur following a heavy storm and one of the damaged cars was a police patrol car escorting Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Seri Ab Rauf Yusoh.

On May 8 in Penang, an 80-year-old man was injured after a tree fell on him at the Penang Botanic Gardens while another tree fell across Jalan Macalister in George Town on May 11, heavily damaging several cars.

On May 7, a 47-year-old man died after his car was among 17 vehicles hit when an over-half-a-century-old tree fell along Jalan Sultan Ismail, Kuala Lumpur.

On April 4, a 48-year-old man was killed after a tree fell on his car along Jalan Senawang-Paroi near Taman Rashidah Utama in Negri Sembilan.