

Govt urged to establish native tree bank

KUALA LUMPUR: The government has been advised to establish a native tree bank as a strategic step not only in mitigating climate change but also to provide a sustainable solution to the issue of trees toppling.

Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia president Assoc Prof Dr Nor Atiah Ismail said the specialty of local trees lies in its resilience, adaptation to weather, quality of flora and fauna and environmental ecology, which can reduce the risk of trees toppling, threatening public safety and damaging property.

"With the tree bank, (when) any untoward incident occurs, tree replacement can be done and solve the issue of high-risk trees in Kuala Lumpur. So, we need native species trees and preferably the species should come from our own forests.

"The use of internal trees (species native to country) is insufficient because healthy and beautiful trees have been exported to Singapore while we receive trees that are said to be cheap from Thailand, such as the bucida tree. But they are not suitable for the ecology of our country because of the aggressive nature of their roots," she said as a guest on the "Reaksi" programme on Bernama Radio on Monday.

According to Nor Atiah, in dealing with the issue of toppling trees, Kuala Lumpur City Hall in particular needs to take decisive action by visually inspecting trees to identify the condition and assess the level of tree health.

"In Kuala Lumpur, trees are located between tall buildings. When the wind is strong, the buildings create a wind tunnel and causes trees to fall, especially if they are old and the roots have decayed."

She said the inspection can be done visually, with risk indications that include excessive shedding of leaves, yellowing, broken twigs or branches, cracked trunks or liquid oozing out of the roots.

Based on such observation, a decision then needs to be made on whether the tree needs to be treated or cut down.

"We should have a data base of which areas need replacement and we ought to be constantly inspecting and analysing them from time to time," she said, adding that every tree cut down needs to be replaced to ensure ecological balance. – Bernama