

Headline	Decision on kiosks soon			
MediaTitle	The Star			
Date	27 Jul 2012	Color	Full Color	
Section	Nation	Circulation	304,904	
Page No	6	Readership	1,026,812	
Language	English	ArticleSize	331 cm ²	
Journalist	MANJIT KAUR and LOSHANA K SHAGAR		AdValue	RM 15,355
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 46,065	



Decision on kiosks soon

Council to rule on Taiping Lake Gardens project on Monday

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IPOH: The fate of the food and souvenir kiosks planned for the Taiping Lake Gardens will be known on Monday.

The Mentri Besar's political secretary Datuk Shalimin Shaffie said the Taiping Municipal Council had collected views from those opposing the project and also those who were in favour of it.

"The council will come up with a solution by Monday," Shalimin said at the state secretariat building yesterday.

The Star reported yesterday that several non-governmental organisations and Taiping folk had initiated a signature campaign to protest against the construction of the eight food, handicraft and souvenir kiosks in Jalan Pekeliling at the gardens.

Although no raintree would be cut down, they fear that the RM3.6mil project by the Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA) would "threaten" the trees and harm the tranquil atmosphere at the park, said to be the country's oldest.

Asked why the project was not brought to the attention of the state executive council prior to its approval, Shalimin said there was no need for such procedure since it came under the NCIA.

"Local councillors in Taiping are aware of the project and I am sure they will come up with a solution in the best interest of all concerned."

Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir also expressed hope that the council would look into the matter since it was of public interest.

Disputed project: The Northern Corridor project is seen next to the raintrees at the Taiping Lake Gardens.



Meanwhile, the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) has recommended that any construction at the iconic Lake Gardens should be further away from the critical root zones of the garden's raintrees.

A source from the institute said their arborist had submitted a report on how to minimise the damage to the trees if the proposed construction of eight food, handicraft and souvenir kiosks were to take place.

"Raintrees are generally adaptable but these trees are over 100 years old, thus are more sensitive to disturbances. And they are of historical importance. Our advice is that no construction should be carried out around the critical root zones," said the source.

FRIM also said the council should involve arborists before and during construction to ensure minimal disturbance to the trees and the environment.

Environmental advocacy group EcoKnights founder and president Yasmin Rasyid said the project, although potentially beneficial in economic terms, could affect nature conservation efforts.

Yasmin believed the project was not necessary as the garden had a niche tourist demographic.

"They are more likely to enjoy the place in all its natural beauty. The project will not only turn these groups away, but attract those who are more interested in the kiosks than in nature."