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Garden in the sky

Rooftop gardening proposed as alternative to fight flash floods

By **TAN SIN CHOW**

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GARDENING on rooftops can serve as an alternative to overcome flash floods in the cities, said Malaysia Park and Recreation Association (MyPARK) assistant secretary Noriah Mat.

"Foliage on a rooftop garden allows water to be retained, thus helping to eliminate flooding in urban areas.

"With less water runoff to the ground, there is sure to be less flooding.

"Preliminary studies by researchers show that this is an effective measure as it can also help to maximise space on the rooftops of high-rise buildings here," she said during the Malaysia Urban Green Space and International Federation of Parks and Recreation Administration (Ifpra) Asia Pacific Conference 2014 yesterday at a hotel in Penang.

The rooftop garden topic was presented by Nur Nafisah Muslal and Nurhayati Abdul Malek of International Islamic University Malaysia.

The two participants also said rooftop gardens were the answer to overcoming issues rising from urbanisation and loss of natural resources.

"It helps to bring back nature into the urban area as most large cities are now facing a shortage of land. We hope our study can help to improve the environment and quality of life in

urban areas," said one of them.

Meanwhile, Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) Ecotourism and Urban Forestry Programme head Dr Noor Azlin Yahya said more than 70% of the country's population were residing in urban areas.

"The country is challenged with the need to balance its economical and societal needs with ecological responsibilities.

"Which is why urban green space is needed for improvement of health and mental wellbeing, besides the educational values," she said.

The three-day conference, which ended today, saw speakers from Switzerland, South Africa, British, Japan, New Zealand, Australia and Denmark discussing challenges and sharing the best practices for conservation of natural resources in urban areas.

A total of 38 topics were presented by the speakers on issues ranging from urban forestry

to tree care, ecological and sociological functions, human needs and education.

Some 100 participants took part in the conference, themed 'Park as Melting Pots and Ventues for Environmental Learning' which is jointly organised by the council, Ifpra and FRIM with the support of International Union of Forest Research Organisation.

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Viable solution: Filepic of a rooftop garden featuring fruit trees, sculptures and a pond above a shopping complex in Tokyo. Malaysia Park and Recreation Association assistant secretary Noriah Mat says rooftop foliage helps reduce water runoff to the ground, hence minimising flash floods.