

Headline	ROOT IT OUT		
MediaTitle	New Straits Times		
Date	15 Oct 2014	Color	Full Color
Section	Streets Central	Circulation	149,000
Page No	1,2	Readership	447,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	1166 cm²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 40,039
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 120,117



# ROOT IT OUT

Residents and motorists urge City Hall to improve its tree maintenance to prevent mishaps during a storm

→ Report by **NOEL ACHARIAM, FARHANA SYED NOKMAN and C. PREMANANTHINI** on page 2



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# City folk want trees maintained

**LIVES AT STAKE:** City Hall urged to conduct more frequent checks for weakened and diseased trees

CITY folk are urging City Hall to act fast to prevent more accidents caused by trees felled during downpours and storms.

In the latest incident on Sunday, two policemen, Corporal Dzulkhairi Ahmad and Constable Mohd Shahril Hisham Hashamdi, who were on duty in a courts exhibits storeroom in Jalan Belfield, Kampung Attap, were killed during a freak thunderstorm on Sunday.

Road users said City Hall and its contractors must conduct regular tree pruning to prevent future mishaps.

Bangsar Baru Residents' Association (RA) secretary Prem Kumar Nair said City Hall was responsible for ensuring that the trees do not pose a danger to the public.

"They must monitor the trees and ensure that they are well maintained, especially during the rainy season.

"It is unfortunate that two policemen have lost their lives. Such an incident could have been avoided if the trees were properly maintained. The issue needs to be dealt with immediately, before more untoward incidents occur," he said.

Prem said City Hall must also constantly monitor its contractors to ensure that they are doing their job.

"If the contractors are not doing their job, the problem comes back to City Hall," he said.

Prem said it was not the first time trees were uprooted and branches fallen on houses and vehicles (*see accompanying story*) and City Hall should not blame the erratic weather for such occurrences.

A resident who declined to be named said City Hall should have a proper inventory of all species of

trees here.

"Ipoh City Council, for instance, has a database of trees planted in the municipality.

"Most of the trees here are old and need constant care as they are exposed to harsh conditions including development and air pollution. Even a strong forest tree type like the jati would not be able to endure such conditions unless it is regularly inspected and properly maintained.

"We don't want to see more accidents before we can see improvements. I am now fearful whenever it rains heavily and even the sound of thunder is enough to send shivers down my spine.

"Accidents do happen, but City Hall should step up and take all precautionary measures instead of blaming bad weather.

"Deploying its emergency response team to remove fallen branches after downpours is not enough. More should be done to improve the condition of trees here," she said.

Taman Tun Dr Ismail RA chairman Mohd Hatim Abdullah said City Hall should replace trees found to be weak or diseased so that they do not endanger nearby residents and road users.

"Trees that are weak or sick should be replaced or treated. Their tree branches break easily during a downpour and when there are strong winds. There is a need

for regular trimming of trees at residential areas around the city.

"City Hall has contractors carrying out trimming work here, but that is not enough.

"In my neighbourhood, a branch fell from a tree and was stuck among electric cables. The contractors need to inspect the trees

more often," he said.

Kepong Community Centre head Yee Poh Ping said City Hall should hire more contractors to maintain and prune the trees.

"The 17 contractors currently doing tree maintenance are not enough to cover the city and all residential areas.

"We are not asking City Hall to chop down the trees but to address the issue with appropriate methods," he said.

Meanwhile, City Hall said it would soon hold a meeting with Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) and contractors and experts to discuss and study the maintenance of city trees.

Mayor Datuk Seri Ahmad Phesal Talib said City Hall had yet to determine the losses and damage caused by the storm on Sunday.

"About 53 cases involving snapped (split) branches and felled trees were reported, which brings the total number of cases of trees damaged this month to 95.

"A few places were affected — SK Kwan Cheng in Jalan Hose, Wisma Ikram, where an awning was blown away and stuck in a tree, and Jalan Raja Laut, where some trees were felled. However, clearing work has been completed," he said.

He said the appointed contractors were required to have an arborist to check on the condition of the trees daily.

The mayor admitted there was a need to identify unhealthy trees so that they could get special attention and expert advice from FRIM, if need be.

"We need proper solutions and advice from the experts," he said.

City Hall has currently 17 contractors tasked with pruning trees in the constituencies.



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Motorists navigate carefully around **a tree uprooted in a storm** in Seri Sabah, Cheras. Pic by Farizul Hafiz Awang



Datuk Seri Ahmad Phesal Talib calls for **proper solutions and advice** from experts



Yee Poh Ping says the **17 contractors** hired by City Hall to prune the trees are **insufficient**