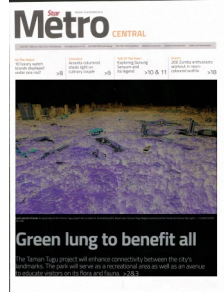


Headline	Green lung to benefit all		
MediaTitle	The Star		
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Section	Metro	Circulation	338,368
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Lush parcel of land: An aerial view of the Taman Tugu project site includes KL Sentral (top left), Royal Lake Club and Tugu Negara (centre) and the Parliament House (top right). — GLENN GUAN/The Star

Green lung to benefit all

The Taman Tugu project will enhance connectivity between the city's landmarks. The park will serve as a recreational area as well as an avenue to educate visitors on its flora and fauna. >2&3

A clearer picture of the future Taman Tugu

Project in secondary forest in Kuala Lumpur to have various features benefitting the public

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Stories by BAVANI M

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WHEN Khazanah Nasional Bhd unveiled their multi-million ringgit Taman Tugu project recently, there was a lot of backlash over its scope and timing.

Many questioned the need for spending so much money on tree planting, while some expressed concerns over what was assumed to be a development within a natural rainforest.

There were also some misunderstanding that the project would mean the iconic Tugu Negara will be demolished.

Khazanah Nasional Bhd executive director Jiv Sammanthan and senior vice-president Calvin Rageem Jacob cleared some of the misconceptions about the project in an exclusive interview with *StarMetro*.

Secondary park, not rainforest

Walking through a lush trail of vegetation on a plot that is part of the 26.7ha secondary forest, we stopped at a spot, which is about 0.4ha in size.

This spot will be the water play area which is part of the children's playground in the family zone.

"People think we are destroying a rainforest to build this play area.

"They think it is going to be a theme park, but they do not realise that this is a secondary park and there are more shrubs here than trees.

"If you look around, you will notice the little blue tags stuck on the trees; these are the trees that will be retained," said Jiv.

"About 1,000 trees have been tagged by Malaysian Nature Society and Forest Research Institute Malaysia.

"It took us more than two years to identify and study each and every tree," said Calvin.

In addition to that, 5,000 trees will be transplanted for the project.

"Only wild bushes and decaying trees will be removed," said Jiv.

Plans for the water play area include building an amphitheatre where parents can sit and watch their children play.

Links to the park

Khazanah said construction is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2017 and is targeted for completion by 2019.

About 75% of the total Taman

Tugu project cost of RM650mil had been allocated almost equally in three parts while RM100mil will be for operations and maintenance.

The breakdown is as follows – conserving and activating the park (RM180mil), setting up a learning and innovation centre (RM180mil), operations and maintenance (RM100mil) and connecting the surrounding area with connectors (RM180mil).

"Park connectors are a crucial element to make a park sustainable and we need to work with private companies to ensure there is a seamless connectivity via bridges, underpasses and pedestrian walkways.

"For instance, currently, in order to get from KL Sentral to Muzium Negara, we have to dice with danger to cross busy highways.

"The experience takes away the joy one gets from an outdoor experience and the hot weather does not help either," Jiv said.

The connectors include construction of a one-kilometre sheltered walkway from Bank Negara KTM Komuter station to the Taman Tugu main entrance (which is opposite Lanai Kijang).

There will also be a 100m underpass from the southern end of Taman Tugu to Taman Botani Perdana.

A 500m pedestrian deck of about four to six metres wide will connect KL Sentral (from the CIMB building) to Taman Botani Perdana via Muzium Negara. This deck will land on the trail along the lake.

Also from KL Sentral (between St Regis and Sentral Residences),

there will be a 20m overhead bridge to the front of Muzium Negara's main entrance.

"Khazanah will be engaging with more partners to work on a 'win-win' situation on the connectors," said Jiv, adding that so far MRCB and CIMB were keen on the proposal.

He also said an open tender process would be carried out to award contracts and there would also be an architecture and design competition to encourage public participation.

"So, the calculations are just an estimate for now. We will only finalise the dimensions once we know who our partners are," said Jiv.

Highlights and features

Jiv said that while construction on the connectors would start simultaneously in the first quarter of 2017, the deck from KL Sentral to Taman Botani Perdana was expected to take the longest as it traversed major highways and required careful engineering and consideration of the MRT lines that run beneath it along Jalan Damansara.

All connectors will be disabled-friendly and bicycle-friendly.

"We want to see mothers with strollers, joggers, and even the disabled people using these facilities to get to the park.

"The deck will link KL Sentral to the park and I am confident it will generate revenue for the city.

"If we can get 10% of tourists who are in Kuala Lumpur for a day or two, to enjoy the park, we are confident that the project will pay for itself in a year," he said.

Where food and beverage is concerned, there will be a lakeside food court serving authentic Malaysian food as well as stalls set up in the vicinity of the *surau*.

"To ensure cleanliness of the park is maintained and there is easy access for patrons, only two areas will be designated as food and beverage spots.

"While we are still working on the finer details of the food and beverage offerings, the aim is to ensure there are sufficient eateries with a variety of options," said Jiv.

Khazanah is gathering feedback from the public on the types of food they would like to see in the park through a survey on their website www.tamantugu.com.my.

An educational zone

An integral part of the project is the educational zone which will provide an interactive learning experience that emphasises on environmental awareness, education and appreciation.

"We want people who come here to also learn about the type of flora and fauna that we have," said Calvin, adding that the education zone would feature a Rainforest Education Centre as well as a Learning and Innovation Centre which was currently being referred to as Khazanah Ilmu.

Khazanah Ilmu will include a public library for various ages and interest groups, study areas and collaborative spaces, as well as auditoriums and rooms for contin-

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uous learning programmes.

Other aspects include a site designated for camping and the company plans to open it up to students.

There will also be an observation deck located on the highest point to view the city.

The century-old Malaysian Administrative and Diplomatic Service Association (PPTD) building will be retained at the existing site. The clubhouse was established in 1904, for British officers and subsequently used by local officers in 1921.

The Government has also agreed to place Taman Tugu in a public trust; preserving it as a green lung for perpetuity.

“Once this is done, we are hoping that in future, other open space nearby will also be preserved for the good of the future generation.

“And for the record, Tugu Negara will not be demolished,” Jiv concluded.



A computer-generated image of the observation deck to be built at Taman Tugu.

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Jiv (right) and Calvin looking towards the location where the link between KL Sentral and Muzium Negara will be built.



Pedestrians have to dash across a busy road to get to Muzium Negara from KL Sentral. The project will connect people in a seamless manner with covered walkways.



This parcel of land that is part of the 26.7ha secondary forest will be the future water play area which is part of the children's playground.



The walkway from KL Sentral to Taman Botani Perdana.