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URBAN FOREST PARK

Taman Tugu to be placed under Awan's care

KUALA LUMPUR: National public trust Amanah Warisan Negara (Awan) will be the custodian of Taman Tugu.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who announced this yesterday, said the 26.7ha site in the heart of the capital city here would be placed under the trust in perpetuity, as an urban forest park.

Najib said the government had approved an additional 10.12ha of adjacent land to be allocated for the Taman Tugu project, bringing the total land area to 36.8ha.

"Together with the nearby Perdana Botanical Garden, the total land area will 133.9ha.

"This will make Taman Tugu comparable to Hyde Park in London and other green lungs in major first-world cities, such as New York City," he said during a tree-planting ceremony at Taman Tugu yesterday afternoon in conjunction with Hari Hasanah, an event by strategic investment fund Khazanah Nasional Bhd on Sept 3, to promote and foster uni-

ty and patriotism among Malaysians, in line with the Negaraku campaign.

Najib said the project was close to his heart as it was a Transformasi Nasional 2050 (TN50) project meant for the future generation.

He noted that from the many TN50 dialogues, one of the recurring themes was that people wanted a clean environment and to live in a liveable city.

"This project has the underlined support of Malaysians despite initial opposition by some.

"But, after Khazanah engaged them, they understood and supported the project," he said.

He said 1,000 species of trees would be planted amidst camping, running and hiking sites in the park, adding that the species would be chosen to reflect the nation's heritage.

"People will no longer have to go far to appreciate nature's diversity."

He said the project, alongside the River of Life project which

sought to transform Sungai Klang and Sungai Gombak, were testament to Malaysia being ranked as among the best places in the world to retire.

In March, Malaysia was ranked sixth in the Annual Global Retirement Index, compiled by the experts at International Living, edging out the likes of Portugal, Nicaragua and Spain.

Najib also announced a design competition for gazebos and benches to be placed in Taman Tugu. The competition is being organised in collaboration with Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia and will be open to Malaysians.

The Taman Tugu project was launched by Najib a year ago, as a corporate social responsibility project by Khazanah in conjunction with its 25th anniversary celebration in 2019.

Present were former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his wife, Tun Jeanne Abdullah; Khazanah managing director Tan Sri Azman Mokhtar;

Kuala Lumpur Mayor Datuk Seri Mohd Amin Nordin Abd Aziz; and, CIMB Group chairman Datuk Seri Nazir Razak.

The transformation of Tugu Negara is a collaboration between Khazanah and Kuala Lumpur City Hall, supported by other agencies, including the Federal Territories Ministry, Economic Planning Unit, Public-Private Partnership Unit, Forest Research Institute of Malaysia and non-governmental organisation Malaysian Nature Society.

The first phase of the RM650 million project is expected to be ready by mid-2018.

"Upon completion, it will provide additional publicly accessible green space for the community between Taman Tugu and its surrounding areas.

The project complements the 11th Malaysia Plan as well as Greater Kuala Lumpur and Klang Valley initiatives to transform Kuala Lumpur into a world-class city by 2020, by, among others, enhancing its pedestrian network.

Together with the nearby Perdana Botanical Garden, the total land area will 133.9ha. This will make Taman Tugu comparable to Hyde Park in London and other green lungs in major first-world cities, such as New York City.

DATUK SERI NAJIB RAZAK
Prime minister