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REST OF THE NEWS

Tangkak: Gateway to Gunung Ledang

TANGKAK: The town of Tangkak is not only famous for its scores of textile shops, it is also a major gateway to Johor's highest peak Gunung Ledang.

Now it has another attraction – the Mini Miracle Garden, inspired by none other than the legendary princess of Gunung Ledang who, as folklore had it, was a denizen of the mountain.

A brainchild of Member of Parliament for Ledang Datuk Dr Hamim Samuri, the garden, sprawled over 900 square metres, was opened to the public on Oct 14. It is located next to Masjid Jamek Tangkak in Bandar Baharu Tangkak.

Hamim, who is also Deputy Natural Resources and Environment Minister, hoped it would turn out to be a crowd-puller.

"Dubai (in the United Arab Emirates) has its own Dubai Miracle Garden which is one of the biggest gardens in the world. Ours may be small but it's full of meaning," he said earlier at the opening of a model village herbal plot in Kampung Sagil, not far from here.

Tangkak District Council town and country planning officer Zulkifli Sabree said the council took about six weeks to develop the Mini Miracle Garden at a cost of RM100,000, provided by the federal government.

As for the technical aspect involving the landscaping, design and layout of the garden, the council sought the expertise and guidance of the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM), he said.

"Our intention was to create a mini garden that bore some connection with the mythical Puteri Gunung Ledang," Zulkifli said when met, here recently.

"Some of the elements of the fable about the princess are depicted in the form of sculptures which you can find in this park. There are also other sculptures of jars and receptacles."

Among the more interesting sculptures are the seven "stepping stones" that symbolise the conditions the princess had supposedly imposed on a sultan of Melaka who wanted to be betrothed to her.

According to folklore, the princess had demanded that the ruler build a golden walkway for her to walk to Melaka from the mountain; a silver walkway for her to return home; seven barrels of tears from virgin girls; seven barrels of young betel nut juice; seven trays filled with hearts of mites; seven trays filled with hearts of mosquitoes; and a silver bowl filled with the blood of the sultan's young son.

"With the opening of this garden, we hope to attract more visitors to Tangkak," said Zulkifli, adding that more unique sculptures would be added from time to time and the lighting would also be improved to allow night-time visits.

Assistant landscape architect for the mini garden project Mohd Hanafi Mohd Lazim said its concept has a combination of modern and traditional elements.

In terms of its softscape or vegetation, he said FRIM's advice was sought on the type of plants that could be grown in the garden.

"We decided to go for flowering shrubs, as well as those that have colourful leaves because a garden has to have a splash of colours to make it look outstanding."

"We also settled for topiary plants that have uniform shapes. There are also potted plants and creepers decorating the mini gateway to the garden," he said.

Among the flowering plants grown at the garden are bougainvillea, Amazon Blue or Otacanthus caeruleus, petunia hybrid, Japanese rose, Mexican petunia or Ruellia simplex and white alder or Turnera subulata.

The Mini Miracle Garden also features Alternanthera dentata, Alternanthera ficoidea and Duranta, all shrub species sporting colourful leaves; as well as palms and ornamental plants like Raphis exvelsa and Pisona alba.

The garden's hardscape or landscape architecture includes the gateway and various sculptures, including that of bicycles and wheelbarrows bearing potted flowering plants. – Bernama

