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No more cars in Lake Gardens

Council: Traffic could potentially harm park's 120-year-old rain trees

TAIPING

By CHAN LI LEEN
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PART of Taiping Lake Gardens will be closed off to motorised vehicles effective immediately, in a move to preserve its rain trees.

Taiping Municipal Council president Dairik Abd Rahim Md Ariff said a 630m-stretch of road, which makes up about a quarter of the entire Lake Gardens loop, will permanently become a pedestrian walk and cycling path.

"There are about 15 rain trees, all of them more than 120 years old. Their roots are very sensitive and any vehicle that passes in the area, has an impact on the roots underneath.

"We are hoping that by closing off the road, the rain trees can live for another 100 years," Abd Rahim said.

The closure, he added, also meant that Taiping folk would have another spot to exercise and enjoy the scenery.

According to Abd Rahim, the decision to ban motorised vehicles was made after consultations with several quarters, including the National Landscape Department, Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) and public interest groups.

"We are working closely with the department and FRIM.

"In fact, this move is based on their recommendations," he said.

"This decision has been a long one in the making.

"It has taken us some time to come up with the new ruling because the state government's approval is required and changes in the by-law must be gazetted," he added.

Abd Rahim also said recent tests carried out on the 15 rain trees showed that, except for one or two trees, the density of their trunks look fine for now.

Lauding the council's initiative to preserve the rain trees, housewife Satia Kaur, 61, said rain trees surrounding the lake was a beautiful sight.

"The place is really picturesque. You can see the rain trees from one end to another.

"It is also better to close the road because right now, we have to keep looking out for cars or motorcycles. Sometimes, there are even lorries that speed past.

"There is no peace when you are trying to relax," she said, adding that the area used to be also frequented by *mat rempit*.

Media relations executive Choo



Taiping Lake Garden's rain trees are 120 years old and the council hopes they will live for another 100 more.

Pei Wei, who likes to unwind and enjoy the natural beauty of the Lake Gardens on weekends, said the step taken by the council to preserve the rain trees is necessary.

"As it is, the branches of trees along that section of the Lake Gardens are growing really low.

"They are almost touching the surface of the water and eventually some may obscure the view of motorists. To close off the road would be the best thing to do, as cutting down the trees is not an option," Choo said.

Established in 1880, the Taiping Lake Gardens is one of the oldest in Malaysia.

What was a disused mining area was transformed into a nature sanctuary.

From the lake, one can stroll to the Taiping Zoo.

It is also the gateway to Maxwell Hill or Bukit Larut as it is known today.



The serene Taiping Lake Garden is popular among both locals and tourists. — Filepic

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A picture showing an uprooted tree. It was taken by a passerby using a mobile phone.



Taiping residents welcome the council's action to protect the rain trees.



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