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Zooming in on high-risk trees

Govt vows to help tackle tree fall problem, says Wan Junaidi

By JAROD LIM
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KUALA LUMPUR: As tree doctors are being sent to check on high-risk trees in the city following the freak incident of a fallen tree, the Government promises to help city council staff get up to speed with arboriculture.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said training and other forms of aid can be offered to city councils and state governments to reduce accidents resulting from falling trees.

FRIM (Forest Research Institute Malaysia) has the expertise to identify trees that are at risk and need to be propped up or chopped down," he told a press conference in Parliament yesterday.

Dr Wan Junaidi acknowledged that the risk of falling trees is sometimes not adequately addressed in town planning.

"It is a common problem because many of the large trees planted in cities and towns are fast-growing ones.

"These types of trees have roots that are mostly on the surface level and do not penetrate deeper into the earth, so when the area around these trees is developed over time, the risk of the trees falling will also increase," he said.

Dr Wan Junaidi was responding to the incident on Monday morning where two newlyweds were hurt when a large 130-year-old raintree fell along Jalan Ampang.

Meanwhile, Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) has started drafting a



Shady greenery: Large trees lining Jalan Ampang that provide much needed but precarious shelter from the sun.

high-risk tree management plan to identify such trees.

"It will focus on trees planted by the roadside.

"And with that report, arborists will be appointed to conduct detailed inspections on them.

"The arborists will then come out with a tree management plan on whether the trees will be maintained and treated, replaced or cut down," DBKL said in a statement.

A DBKL spokesman added that inspections would be stepped up around the area of the fallen tree.

"DBKL has also pushed contrac-

tors to engage arborists to determine the locations of high-risk trees," he said, adding DBKL contractors were only responsible for pruning and crown reduction of trees.

Elsewhere, Shah Alam appointed 46 contractors to carry out scheduled tree-pruning in streets, playgrounds and green spaces.

"Within the council we have an arborist, and there are two other officers in the same department taking the exam to be certified," said its city council's corporate communications head Shahrin Ahmad.

Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ) corporate and strategic management deputy director Azfarizal Abdul Rashid said trees are frequently monitored, pruned and cut based on needs and public complaints.

MPSJ, he added, had organised a "Peduli Pokok MPSJ 2018" course jointly with the Malaysian Arborist Association from Feb 26 to 28.

"It was to ensure the local officers and council contractors are trained in arboriculture and landscape maintenance's best practices," he said.