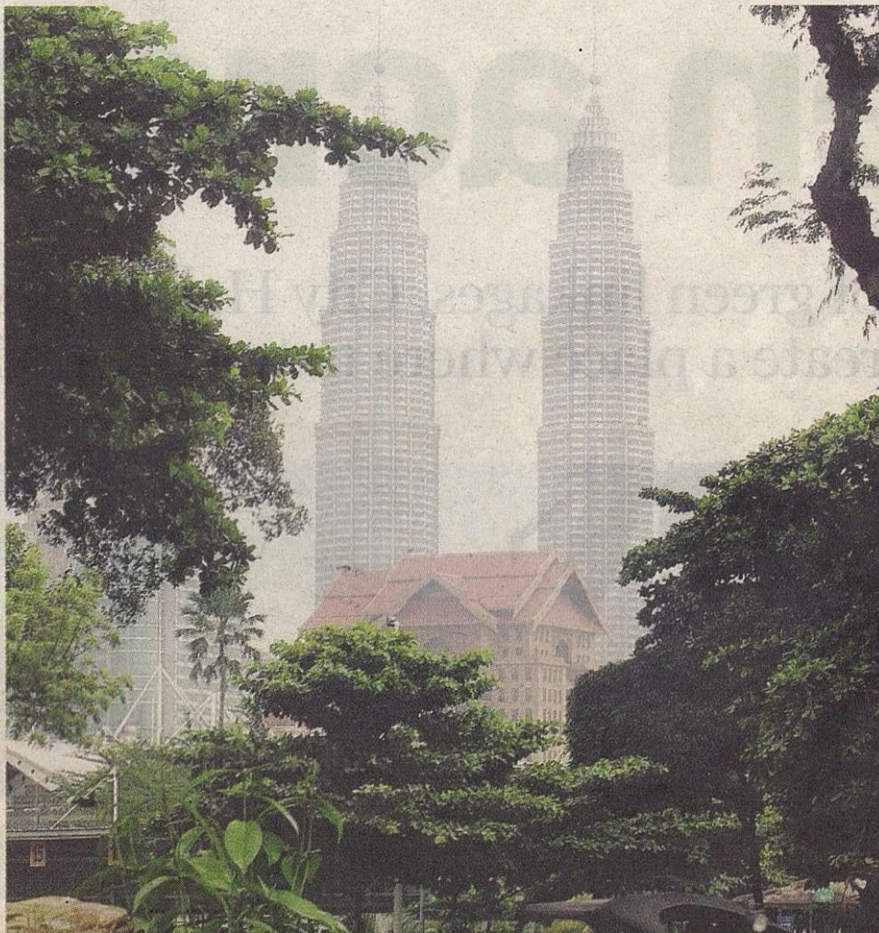


Green links for a

AGAINST a backdrop of skyscrapers, condominiums and malls lie trees, plants and shrubs where wildlife like birds, lizards and squirrels roam freely - this vision is what Kuala Lumpur City Hall hopes to create by the 2020 via its green linkage system - a project to bring the jungle into the city and the city into the jungle.



Plan aims to bring

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Photos by **SAMUEL ONG**
and courtesy of **DBKL**

IMAGINE a spot in the heart of Kuala Lumpur amidst sprawling skyscrapers and bustling highways zigzagging with LRT and Monorail lines, a spot that is a green sanctuary where squirrels, lizards and birds come out to play.

This is not a fantasy and may yet be a reality if Kuala Lumpur City Hall's green linkage system - a project to create a network of green corridors throughout the city comes to fruition.

The green linkage system is an inspiration to connect pockets of green belts located in the fringes of town into the heart of the city.

The green linkage will connect parks, playgrounds, and green belts into the city centre and will run through other green areas in the outskirts.

"The idea is to link green areas located in the outer edge of towns into urban areas," said Kuala Lumpur City Hall landscape and urban cleanliness department deputy director Siti Zakiah Mohamed.

"The connection will run through parks, gardens, ponds, rivers, lakes and surround the town," she said.

The linkage involves planting trees and plants along highways and roads and even getting developers to create their own green areas within their developments.

"Imagine cruising along the highway and, as you enter Kuala Lumpur, instead of concrete jungle, you see green belts everywhere," said Siti Zakiah.

"We hope that Kuala Lumpur will be surrounded by linked parks, playgrounds and rivers in line with our vision of transforming KL into a sustainable tropical garden by 2020."

The idea is creating the green linkage system

Environ's dream: The green linkage system aims to connect pockets of green belts to the heart of the city.



The idea in creating the green linkage system, said Siti Zakiah, is the need to protect our natural environment.

"We want make sure that city folks have a chance to be close to nature, to appreciate and respect Mother Nature's bounty.

"As KL residents become more aware and knowledgeable about the effects of global warming, the need for such a project is vital," she said.



All tied up: City Hall envisions green belts stretching from one end of the city to the other, like this scene near Dataran Merdeka.

better city

the jungle into Kuala Lumpur

»The idea is to link green areas located in the outer edge of towns into urban areas«

SITI ZAKIAH MOHAMED

Siti Zakiah added that benefits of having a green area in the middle of the city are numerous.

“Air quality will improve, the trees would provide shade and shelter, erosion will decrease and it would bring in the wildlife into the town centre.

Siti Zakiah said the department is currently in the process of gazetting its green lungs.

A core aspect of the department’s work is tree planting.

“Each year, we plant some 70,000 trees all over the city and if there is a need to bring

down trees for development, we insist that for every tree felled, another four are planted,” she said, adding that on that score the department will not compromise.

When the city was inundated with flash floods and thunderstorms three weeks ago, Siti Zakiah was crestfallen.

She was busy preparing the evening meal when she got news of the devastation down town.

“At that time, all I could think of were my poor trees,” said Siti Zakiah.

Indeed, after 25 years with the local authority’s landscape division, Siti Zakiah has developed a passion for trees and plants and all things green.

“I only managed to sleep at 4am that day, once I got the tally of the number of trees that came down as a result of the storm,” she said.

Planting trees, she said, was the best way to ensure the green linkage system works.

“In the early 80’s, we planted many angsa trees all over the city. That time no roads were without trees – it was a long-term plan for sustainable living.

“The trees provided shade, cut down heat, and provided oxygen,” she said, adding nowadays the trend is to plant more of the forest species to bring the jungle into the city.

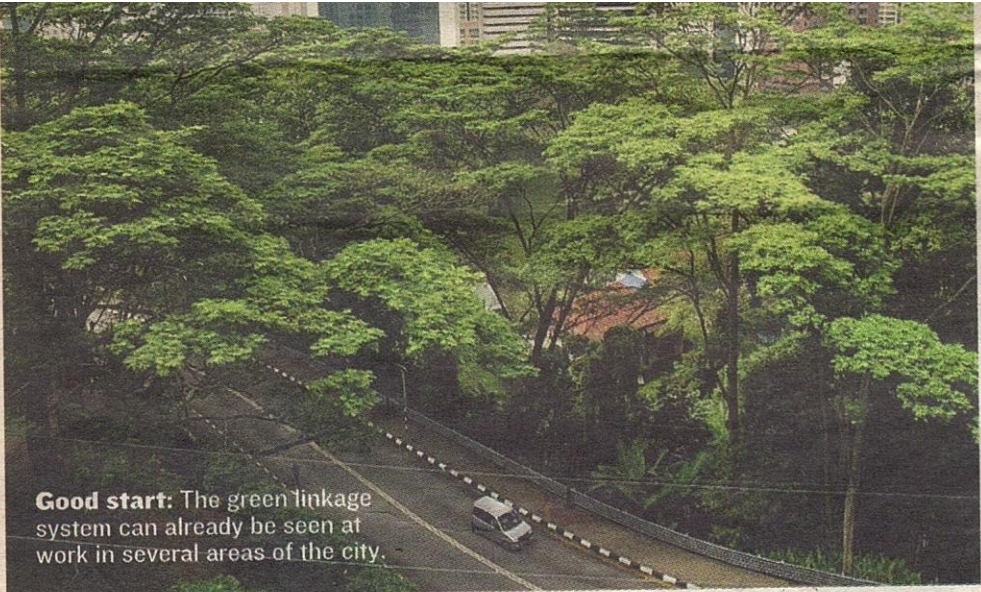


Flower power: Siti Zakiah having a look at some orchids.



Shady: Jalan Raja Laut is already green with trees lining both sides of the road.





Good start: The green linkage system can already be seen at work in several areas of the city.

WHY TREES ARE VITAL?

– Produce Oxygen and act as a giant filter to clear the air.

– Act as a buffer to noise pollution.

– Control flash floods by cutting off water flow during heavy downpour.

– Enhance property values.

– Act as a filter to prevent harmful pollutants like sewage and chemicals from entering the earth.

– Prevent soil erosion.

– Provide shade and shelter.

