

Planning for City with Soul

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THE River of Life project is bound to revolutionise and transform the Klang and Gambang rivers along the 12-km stretch within the city centre.

Significantly, Kuala Lumpur is the Malay capital for a conference where two muddy rivers meet.

A much earlier proposed re-institution of rivers and replete their ecosystems, was also carried under the 50th Malaysian City project, which did not take off.

Should it be a tall order now to transform these rivers into iconic waterbodies on par with, say, rivers in cities like Amsterdam, London, Melbourne and Paris by 2020?

Perhaps a reality check is in order. "What we have are two small rivers, no wider than a road. On dry days, it would be difficult to even a small boat over more shallow parts. Moreover, the river is treated as open sewage by those holding no civic consciousness."

Meanwhile, river fails at regular intervals, washing over dikes and defences and causing the rivers after a downpour. Until the Klang RBT, named project was completed, flooding was a common occurrence.

The culture of the Klang river has remained dark, often, much like the history of itself, from the time it was dammed and re-routed in 1887 that led to the flooding of Kuala Lumpur.

This is in part a result of Masterplanning Competition that attracted 27 bids with the shortlisted for voting by the public will ensure the success of the river beautification and development.

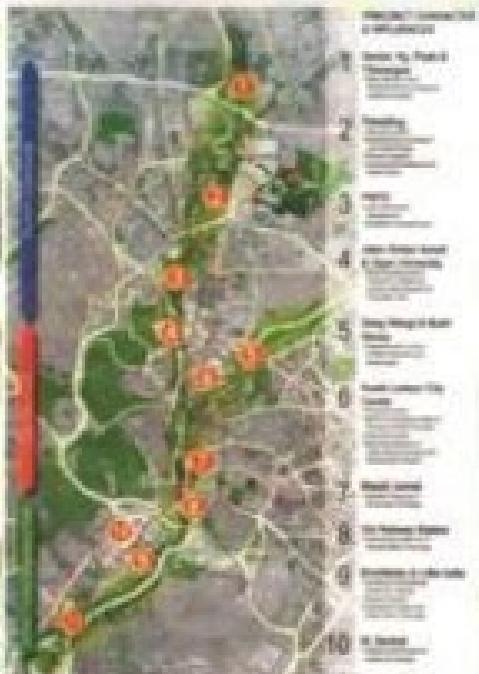
However, the river planning competition may prove to be as challenging as maintaining a three-world infrastructure as our local road networks. It will have to start with the more important by educating the people and controlling the polluters.

It would also be necessary for the city to discuss pricing rates within the city but also the river to remain as it is present deplorable condition downstream. As such, the State government and local authorities should not be random to upgrade the water supply of the Klang River.

The river can come to life with lakes and reservoirs such as river oases, man-made barges and floating restaurants. The restaurants should be paved for walking, jogging and cycling.

Marathon runners can run here instead of on city roads disrupting traffic. With some imagination instead of money, our local authorities can create a large oasis here by making good use of trees that run through their jurisdiction.

On stretches with little economic value, the embankments can be planted with Banyan trees. These unique trees have roots sprouting from their



MAP: COURTESY OF THE PROPOSED RIVER BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT AREA

branches and roots reaching across the road, almost touching the lake. This glorious image is to be preserved in our mind, sleep in our soul.

As such, the branches can be fed to green advocacy, running parallel to the road. It is better to invest. Planning for the best tree and community for the world it will eventually be spread over a century would generate great interest.

Over the past few decades, I have enjoyed watching the majestic rain trees at the Tengger Lake (Gardens), with

their large branches arching across the road, almost touching the lake. This glorious image is to be preserved in our mind, sleep in our soul.

We should carry on replanting trees to grow our earth. It is also true to plant our love and history on selected embankments by planting "Family trees". For an appropriate life, a person can live and plant a tree that will grow for a few hundred years.

Every place is unique with

its own history and interests what it can do. However, if local history is addressed and considerations that make Kuala Lumpur what it is today are acknowledged, the city will be effectively sustained.

Whether the project is the River of Life or City of Life, we can give to the master planer that incorporated real "People and nature" much more than anything else.

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