

# Merancang Bandar Ber'jiwa'

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## Planning for city with soul

THE River of Life project is bound to continue and move from the Klang and Quillan rivers along the 13.5km stretch within the city centre.

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

A much earlier proposed re-institution of rivers and re-link them to man-made water was carried under the 50 billion City project, which did not take off.

Should it be a tall order now to translate these dreams into basic waterbodies in just 10 years, somewhere 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 its civic consciousness."

Meanwhile, river fails at regular intervals, washing away dust and debris and causing the river 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 culture, much like the history of itself, from the time it was dammed and in Kajang in 1887 until in the planning of Kuala Lumpur.

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

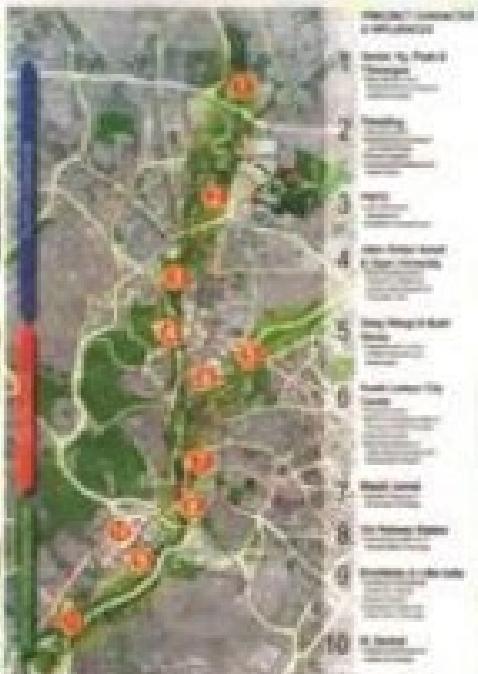
However, the river planning competition may prove to be as challenging as maintaining a three-world infrastructure as our local authorities can only do what they are told.

It would also be necessary for the State government and local authorities to work together to upgrade the current strength 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 authorities can be planted with Banyan trees. These unique trees help make agriculture from these



MAP: COURTESY OF THE PROPOSED RIVER BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT AREA

branches and roots reaching across the road, almost touching the lake. This glorious image is needed periodically in our mind, sleep in our head.

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

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

their huge branches arching across the road, almost touching the lake. This glorious image is needed periodically in our mind, sleep in our head.

We should carry on replanting trees to grow our earth. It is also true to plant our love and history on selected individuals by planting "Family trees". It is appropriate for a person to care 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, no one gets to be the master planner that encompasses real "People and nature coexist from shore till sky" anything else.

VS Chua