

The On-going Campaign Towards Keeping Bukit Kiara Green

Way back in 1976, Landscape Architects and Planners, Royston Hana-moto, Alley and Abey together with twelve other local Consultants were commissioned to prepare the Master Plan of the proposed Public Park planned in Bukit Kiara. The proposed Park was to include the Botanical Gardens (269 hectares), National Mausoleum (105 hectares), the West Valley Park, a golf course and the DBKL nursery.

The Public Park Master Plan was somehow not implemented and along the way two substantial portions of land were alienated to the Bukit Kiara Equestrian Club and the Kuala Lumpur Golf & Country Club. The result of this was the reduction in size of the Botanical Gardens and the National Mausoleum was even aborted.

West Valley Park

The Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) was initially entrusted by the Prime Minister's Department with the task of developing and main-

taining both the Botanical Gardens and the west Valley Park. However, due to funding constraints, FRIM was able to develop and maintain only about 20 plus hectares of the total area earmarked for the Botanical Gardens. But to popularise and develop the Park further, more basic amenities like a proper carpark, children's playground equipment, benches, lighting, rubbish bins, and public toilets need to be provided.

In early 1993, the TTDI Residents' Association took an active role and began meeting with Jabatan Seni Taman dan Rekreasi of DBKL to discuss the possibility of DBKL taking over the task to develop and maintain the above-mentioned parks. The bureaucratic process was slow and in late 1994, news began to surface that the Wilayah Land Office had alienated 4.3 hectares of land from the West Valley Park to five NGO's.

The Association was deeply concerned over the re-designation of the areas originally ear-marked for public parks and initiated a Signature Campaign to get more people involved in the fight to save the park. The response to the Campaign was overwhelming and over the weekend more than a thousand signatures were collected. Finally when the petition was handed over to Datuk Bandar on 1 April 1994, it carried 1,529 signatures. This was closely followed by a dialogue session with the then Datuk Bandar, Dr. Mazlan Ahmad, where it was revealed that DBKL proposed to develop 16.1 hectares of the West Valley Park com-

plete with various facilities at a cost of RM7 million. Work on the park finally started in October 1999 and was completed and finally opened to the public in October 2001 and renamed Taman Lembah Kiara.

Botanical Gardens

Other than the more popular West Valley Park, more than 80 hectares in Bukit Kiara had been set aside for the Botanical Park which also included 8 hectares for Taman Rimba. The Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) had already developed about 12-plus hectares into the Botanical Gardens. This Botanical Gardens is situated adjacent to Kiara Green Townhouses and is accessible from the end of Jalan Tun Mohd Fuad. FRIM has a collection of nearly 5,000 plants here from all over Malaysia as well as other parts of the world. It is understood that this Botanical Gardens had received scientific delegations from many countries who come to study the vast collection of rare flora here.

Bukit Kiara Hill Track

While the West Valley Park was temporarily closed for the upgrading works, the walking track up Bukit Kiara became more popular than ever. The walking enthusiasts were not only from Taman Tun but also from the surrounding housing areas in the Klang Valley. With this newfound popularity, its existing parking facilities had been found inadequate. Upon appeals from the RA and strongly supported by our MP for Segambut Dr. Tan Kee Kwong, about 50-odd additional car parks were added at the foot of the hill walk. This hill track continue to increase in popularity and attract new walking and exercise enthusiasts.

FRIENDS OF BUKIT KIARA

All this time, while canvassing for the development of the Bukit Kiara Green Belt into a proper park with all appropriate infrastructure, the RA had been urging the Authorities to gazette the whole area as a green reserve.

There was very little news on the status of the on-going gazetting process. Finally on 10 June 2001, with the encouragement and support of the MP for Segambut, Dr. Tan Kee Kwong



who was then also the Deputy Minister for Land & Co-operative Development, a new association named "Friends of Bukit Kiara" was launched under the leadership of the then Chairman of the TTDI RA, Mr. Liew Khooi Ching and strongly supported by exercise enthusiasts from nearby housing areas to further our collective interest in the preservation of Bukit Kiara as a permanent green lung for the enjoyment of all Klang Valley residents.

Hundreds of hectares have since been allocated for golf courses, equestrian and recreation clubs, leaving only about a quarter of the original estate land left for public recreation. At stake was three parcels of land totalling 155.85 hectares as shown in adjacent table and attached plan below.

JOINT GREEN APPEAL

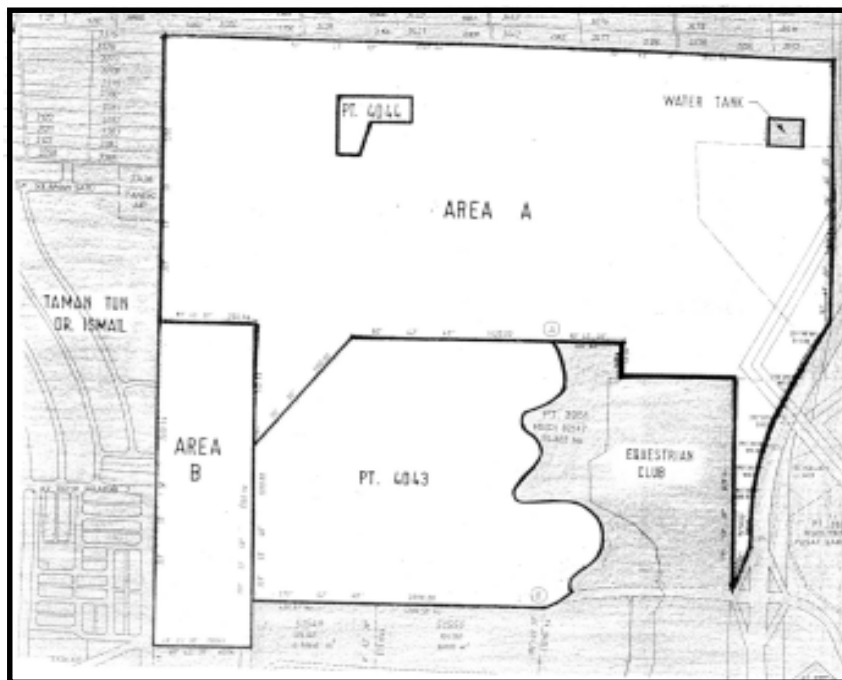
Friends of Bukit Kiara (FOBK) together with residents of Petaling Jaya/Damansara area on 14 May 2005 submitted an appeal to the Prime Minister to gazette all four Plots of the remaining land as permanent green lungs. The petition was endorsed by 37 residents' associations and NGO's and was delivered by MP Dato' Dr. Tan Kee Kwong to the PM.

In 2005, FOBK was informed by the Director of Lands & Mines, Wilayah Persekutuan that Plots A and B had been gazetted as green areas.

The remaining Plot 4043 had been leased by the Federal Land Commission on 1 April 1997 to Measat Digicast Sdn. Bhd. for the purpose of media broadcasting during the Commonwealth Games.

To date, there has been no construction on Plot 4043 as an alternative site had been found for the broadcasting station. But the developer Measat had earlier proposed to build a college and other

Land Parcel	Size	Description of Status
Area A	99.15 ha	Proposed for arboretum, and includes Hill Track (Lot 54267).
Area B	16.17 ha	West Valley Park upgraded by DBKL at a cost of RM9 million and renamed Taman Lembah Kiara (Lot 54269).
PT 4043	40.53 ha	Titled land Lot 54268. Earlier proposed for Asian Broadcasting Centre and leased to MEASAT Digicast. Provides current road access to PT 4044 and Area A.



structures on the land. DBKL has been reported as not in favour of the proposal and would prefer to keep it as a green lung as all them are within the green zone as provided for in the KL STRUCTURE PLAN 2020.

The Ministry of Youth & Sports, NGOs and recreation clubs have organised mountain bike festivals in Bukit Kiara as the hill trails are considered interesting and very challenging even by International standards.

FOBK has written appeal letters to DBKL as well as ministers in the

present Cabinet, and has received encouraging response from many of them expressing support for the preservation Plot 4043 and other areas as green lung for jogging, sports and biking as the Klang Valley is rapidly losing open land to buildings and infrastructure construction.

The MP for Segambut Dato' Dr. Tan Kee Kwong has also appealed to the then Chief Secretary of the Government, Tan Sri Samsudin Osman to recover Plot 4043 and gazette it as a green lung.

After much lobbying by FOBK, finally on 4 October 2005, Deputy Prime Minister, Dato Sri Mohd Najib Tun Haji Abdul Razak chaired a meeting and had decided that the authority repossess Plot 4043 and gazette it as a permanent green area.

So it is with great expectations that we await the final gazette process to be completed for this last parcel of forest land to be conserved as part of the overall green lung.

