

200,000 teak trees dot NSE thanks to 1997 initiative

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KUALA LUMPUR: PLUS Malaysia Bhd's green initiative of planting almost half a million teak trees along the North-South Expressway (NSE) back in 1997 appears to be bearing fruit.

Now, 22 years later, some 200,000 teak trees dot the length of the highway.

Between 1997 and 1999, the highway concessionaire planted hundreds of thousands of trees along NSE, especially in the southern part of the peninsula.

This, the company said, was part of its special three-year CSR Greening Project.

"Teak trees were chosen because of their environmental benefits of producing and releasing more oxygen into the environment," said a PLUS spokesman.

Each teak tree, the spokesman said, cost about RM200 to plant but in the interest of public safety, about 10 per cent of the teak trees had since been removed from the highway alignment, which also cost the company.

"Felling and cutting a teak tree costs about RM2,000. The cost excludes transportation and traf-

fic management plan costs."

Parts of the felled trees were sold off, the spokesman said, adding that generally, only teak trees with a diameter of 300mm and above had commercial value.

"A metric tonne of teak trees can reach up to RM350. One metric tonne is about seven teak trees."

PLUS said it had no plans to replant them as there were enough teak trees greening its highways.

The concessionaire, however, had moved ahead to empower its eco-friendly initiatives.

"We have a five-year Green Road Map that encompasses the implementation of solar photovoltaic (solar PV) panels and solar-powered charging stations at selected rest areas, to name a few," the spokesman said.

In December last year, the PLUS Green Road Map led to the launch of the country's first solar-powered electric vehicle charging station at the Ayer Keroh overhead bridge restaurant (southbound).

The road map also involved the transformation of the Machap (northbound) rest and recreation

area into the first R&R in Malaysia to use photovoltaic solar system in April this year.

PLUS managing director Datuk Azman Ismail said over the next five years, the company aimed to introduce solar PV panels in other rest areas, such as the Sungai Buloh overhead bridge restaurant, Ayer Keroh overhead bridge restaurant, Dengkil R&R (north and southbound), Gurun R&R (north and southbound), Gunung Semanggol R&R (southbound), Tapah R&R (north and southbound) and Ayer Keroh R&R (northbound).

The PLUS headquarters, Persada PLUS, last month bagged the One Diamond award from the Malaysia Sustainable Energy Development Authority's 2018 Low Carbon Buildings Assessment. PLUS is the first highway concessionaire in the country to receive the award.

Azman described it as another milestone for PLUS in its efforts to optimise the use of green technology in preserving the environment for the firm's staff and the surrounding communities.