



Mango Tree at Gedung Kuning & Privacy Policy on Gedung Kuning website

Hidayah Amin <hidayah.amin@gmail.com>

Tue, Jun 26, 2012 at 5:32 PM

To: Julina Khusaini <julina@mhf.org.sg>

Cc: "Norsaleen SALLEH (NHB)" <Norsaleen_SALLEH@nhb.gov.sg>, Zulkarnine Hafiz <zulkarnine@figolive.com>, Masmunah Abdullah <mas@figolive.com>, "ZURAIDAH ABDULLAH (SPF)" <zuraidah_abdullah@spf.gov.sg>, Khir Johari <khir19@gmail.com>, Tommy KOH <Tommy_KOH@mfa.gov.sg>, POON_Hong_Yuen <POON_Hong_Yuen@nparks.gov.sg>, yaacob_ibrahim@mica.gov.sg

Bcc: SWEE ANG <scang@btinternet.com>, Chairul Fahmy Hussaini <chairul@sph.com.sg>

Dear Julina

It came to my attention an hour ago that my mango tree had been chopped down on Saturday June 23. And you emailed to inform me of the MHC's decision only on Monday June 25? Your email last night superseded the actions of chopping down an iconic tree. Had you informed me earlier, I could have taken some decisions to salvage my tree, perhaps replanting it somewhere etc. I am very disappointed at this lack of integrity and cowardice displayed by the MHC – cutting down a tree and informing the 'owner' only when there is no recourse that she could take.

The decision not to chop down the tree was agreed on April 6 meeting at Khir Johari's house. According to the agreement, since there was no termites infestation with the tree (the termites problem was due to the wooden decks that the Tepak Sireh Restoran put up), the tree would not be cut down.

After that meeting, I nominated my mango tree as a heritage tree in an attempt to save it for these reasons:

1. Cultural significance of the mango tree in a Malay family. Malay cooking used a lot of mango and it was not uncommon to find mango trees in kampongs.
2. Historical significance of a mango tree in a historic building.
3. As an understanding of the cultural significance of Malay practice of planting a fruit seed to commemorate birth of a child (which is similar to some cultural practices of other communities in the world).

NParks investigated and informed me that the tree couldn't be considered due to its girth and physical structure etc.

The MHC did not inform me that it would take any further actions (like engaging TP Arbo Care) to assess the tree, especially for removal. The report from TP Arbo Care was created on June 8 and I was informed of this only yesterday. 2 weeks difference is a long time and alternative actions could have been taken.

I quote from my book 'Gedung Kuning: Memories of a Malay Childhood':

"To commemorate my birth, Nenek planted a mango seed in the garden in Gedung Kuning. This seed grew into a tree that bore sweet mangoes that were shared with friends and neighbours. Nenek proudly proclaimed to everyone, "Ini mangga Cik Idah!" (These are Cik Idah's mangoes!)."

I am deeply upset and furious at this blatant disregard for the feelings of the owner of the mango tree. My mango tree is my lifeline. To chop it down is synonymous to the severing of ties to whatever memories I have of my childhood home (Gedung Kuning) and my birthland. And worse of all, I wasn't given the opportunity to think of alternative solutions to 'take' back my mango tree and nurse it.

Every crag and gnarled tree and lonely valley has its own strange and graceful legend attached to it - Douglas Hyde

I am sure most Singaporeans (Malays or otherwise) will react the same way as I have.

Yours truly,

Hidayah

On Mon, Jun 25, 2012 at 3:35 PM, Julina Khusaini <julina@mhf.org.sg> wrote:

Dear Hidayah

I write to update you on the various actions that have been taken to address the matter raised in relation to the mango tree at Gedung Kuning.

2 On 30 May 2012, two officers from NParks (Ms Loh Chay Hwee, Head, NParks (Urban Gardening/Heritage Tree Secretariat & Ms Goh Gan Khing, Manager, Urban Gardening) visited No 73 Sultan Gate to conduct their inspection and evaluation of the mango tree. After their inspection, it was found that the mango tree did not meet the criteria for it to be designated as a "heritage tree". We understand that NParks had subsequently informed you of the outcome of their evaluation via email on 31 May 2012, stating the reasons why it did not meet the criteria to be considered as a heritage tree.

3 Subsequent to this, MHF then engaged an arborist – an expert in the care and maintenance of trees to evaluate the current structural stability of the tree. The appointed arborist, TP Arbo Care Pte Ltd, is one of the experts that had been recommended by NParks. They did their inspection on 6 June 2012 and submitted their report on 8 June 2012. Their findings are attached, for your reference. Paras 4 to 6 (pictures 3a, 3b and 3c) in the report states that:-

- It is observed that there are two big girdling roots and one small girdling root strangling the tree at the tree base. The girdling roots if not removed will eventually kill

the tree or cause the tree to uproot.

- The girdling roots are of 0.25m, 0.2m and 0.05m in diameter respectively. The cutting of these girdling roots may cause the tree to uproot or it may introduce decay into the root system and result in the tree death or uprooting in future.
- Due to the close proximity of the tree to the building, it is recommended that the tree be removed.

4 Following that, we have also sought further advise from NParks if the tree could be trimmed or transplanted to other areas within the compound of the premises. We even explored the possibility of donating the tree to Gardens By the Bay, where it could probably thrive better in a more natural setting. They have a segment which features the flora and fauna usually found in Malay kampongs. Nonetheless, given the evaluation by the expert, NParks has advised that it is also not possible and advisable to transplant the tree elsewhere, especially since the probability of the tree uprooting as a result of cutting the two big girdling roots that are “strangling” the tree, is very high. Moreover, due to the close proximity of the tree to the building, there is a potential damage to the building and injury to members of the public, in the event the tree uproots, unexpectedly.

5 In view of the above circumstances, and in the interest of public safety and the long term preservation of the conserved building, the Management has reviewed all the inputs, feedback and recommendation and made the decision to have the tree removed from the premises.

I forward for your information.

Thanks and best regards.

From: Hidayah Amin [mailto:hidayah.amin@gmail.com]

Sent: Sunday, 13 May, 2012 2:44 PM

To: Julina Khusaini; Norsaleen SALLEH (NHB); Zulkarnine Hafiz; Masmunah Abdullah

Cc: ZURAIDAH ABDULLAH (SPF); Khir Johari

Subject: Mango Tree at Gedung Kuning & Privacy Policy on Gedung Kuning website

Dear Julina and Nursaleen from the MHC team, and Zul and Mas from Fig & Olive Management team,

Hope everyone is well. I am emailing on 2 matters:

Mango Tree

Please refer to the photos of the manao tree at Geduna Kuning. It appeared that the lower branches of the

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mango tree has been chopped off after the building has been acquired in 1999. I assumed the previous tenant had done this.

Anyway, I hope that the MHC will see to it that the mango tree will not be damaged any further. We have agreed on April 6, 2012 meeting that since there was no termites infestation with the tree (the termites problem was due to the wooden decks that the Tepak Sireh Restoran put up), the tree will not be cut down.

The importance of the mango tree is as follows:

1. Cultural significance of the mango tree in a Malay family. Malay cooking used a lot of mango and it was not uncommon to find mango trees in kampongs.
2. Historical significance of a mango tree in a historic building.
3. As an understanding of the cultural significance of Malay practice of planting a fruit seed to commemorate birth of a child (which is similar to some cultural practices of other communities in the world).

Privacy Policy on Gedung Kuning website

I would also like to refer you to the disclaimer and privacy policy on the Gedung Kuning website
- <http://www.gedungkuning.com/disclaimer/index.htm>

I am exercising my legal and moral rights as copyright owner of my Gedung Kuning book and website against any infringement of copyright laws.

Thank you.

Warmest regards,

Hidayah

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