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PRESS STATEMENT

COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE SPACES AND PLAYGROUND SAFETY

1. A landscape architect is a professional who provides art and scientific thinking in the process of analysis, planning, design, management, and stewardship of the natural and built landscape. It is a profession that recognises the needs to bring nature into the urban environment, maintaining the charming rural characters and supporting the development of parks and greeneries for recreational and psychological needs.
2. Landscape architects have been practising in Malaysia for more than 40 years. Since its establishment in 1981, the Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia (ILAM) has been advocating the needs to enhance greenery and landscape spaces through the services of a professional landscape architect. Landscape architects in Malaysia serving in the government agencies, consultancy firms and academic institutions have worked committedly in ensuring that Malaysia is developed with greeneries and effective open spaces. Kuala Lumpur, for example, has evolved as a green city and landscape spaces are vital components for any place developments. Landscape and greeneries have contributed positively in enhancing the quality of our living environment and the human well-being.
3. As a profession that deals with greeneries and landscape spaces, we are responsible to ensure that these outdoor areas are working effectively and enjoyed by people.

Landscape architects design community and public spaces with play areas namely playfield, recreational pools, outdoor gym as well as playgrounds. We, landscape architects, believe that play areas are one of the important landscape components, especially in public parks. Therefore, it is common to have our parks well-equipped with play areas completed with structures for teenagers, children and toddlers as well as gymnasium and exercise facilities for adults. Not to mention, there are also play structures that we design especially for the differently abled people and elderly groups. The play structures have been designed to ensure that all users can enjoy the park while helping them to develop their physical conditions, motor skills and cognitive functions. The country has spent millions of ringgit for the development and maintenance of playgrounds.

4. We acknowledge that various accidents related to playground have occurred from time to time, and unfortunately, the latest accident happened on 24th November 2018 at Taman Metropolitan Kepong, which claimed a teenager's life. We would like to express our condolences to the family of the victim, and we hope and pray that this tragic accident will not ever happen again.

5. There are many factors that may have led to incidents related to play structures in our public parks. Among others are unsuitable design, vandalism, lack of proper maintenance and inappropriate usage. These situations if left unchecked will potentially lead to many more accidents in the future. The deadly case in Kepong has created awareness on the importance of proper design, planning, and management of the play areas. It is our hope that the safety of our play areas can be enhanced so people can enjoy our parks safely.

6. ILAM considers the issues of design, planning and playground safety as critical matters. We believe that accidents can be prevented or minimised through appropriate measures during the planning and design stage, construction period, defect liability period and maintenance period. These are the practises where landscape architects are mostly involved and they are liable for their professional services.

7. ILAM supports all initiatives and efforts by the stakeholders to provide more enjoyable play areas as they bring positive impacts to the society. In this sorrowful playground incident, ILAM would like to strongly recommend for all relevant agencies;

- a. To ensure that the plan for the play areas and structures are designed and submitted to the authority by the professional landscape architects registered with ILAM. The playground submission plan should consist of secure play structures and spaces, conforming to pertinent safety standard and guidelines. Therefore, professional liability and design responsibility for the landscape development can be ensured.
- b. To increase awareness among the public about the safety measures of play areas and structures, especially regarding safety precautions, proper usages, caring and maintenance of the equipment.
- c. To have for greater collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders, especially landscape architects, local authorities, developers, playground safety experts, and various user groups to promote safer, greener, functional and beautiful play areas in Malaysia.

Prof. Madya LAr. Dr. Suhardi Maulan

President

Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia

26 November 2018

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