



Labuan's historic tree has re-grown

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LABUAN: A tree planted by the local Chinese community on June 2, 1932 to commemorate the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at the Labuan History Square in front of the museum in town, which was found perished in 2001 after standing tall for 50 years, has been re-grown (pic).

It was a disturbing fact for the community when the tree was found dead because three other similar trees planted at the square for the same reason and on the same date stood majestically shading the area. The trees were planted by the local Malay and European communities.

This (dead tree) was not taken casually by local Chinese community leaders as the allocated vacant spot was like a misfit and, more importantly, given the community's tendency to link green growth to economic property.

A similar tree was planted at the same spot.

Spearheading the effort was Labuan Chinese Chamber of Commerce Chairman (LCCC) Datuk Wong Kii Yui and its full committee, with seven other clan leaders joining hands. The associations were Kwong Wei Siew, Hainan, Teo Chew, Ann Kawai and Hakka.

A senior LCCC member, Bernard Wong, who was involved in arousing interest about the loss of the Chinese history at the mini-park, said all the community leaders were armed with spades with a red ribbon tied on it.

He explained that the tree was important because it symbolised the close association of the communities under British rule.

"If not for this, the British rule would have selfishly planted one tree representing the entire community," he said.

Besides these trees, there are also other important historical dates at the park and one noteworthy is change of Labuan's name to Maidas during Japanese Rule as a memorial for General Maida (short) who perished in an air crash in 1943.

However, this Japanese name was not used for long. As soon as the Allied troops recaptured Labuan, the island was renamed as Labuan. It is a sad fact that though Labuan had been under British rule since 1846, there is no road or park named after a British unlike in Penang, except there is a building - the Victoria Hotel - at Jalan Tun Mustapha.