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Of lightning and large trees

I AM grateful that *The Star* highlighted the severity of lightning strikes in its report *Malaysians unprepared for lightning strikes* (*The Star*, Nov 10).

There is no doubt that Malaysians in general tend to underestimate the danger of lightning strikes. However, the general public is not the only guilty one. I am under the impression that local authorities are also taking the matter lightly.

It was only last November that my house suffered a direct lightning strike which left a couple of cracks in my outer walls.

The circuit breaker in my house and the main fuses from Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) in the electricity meter were toasted.

Obviously, the lightning showed no mercy on the wiring and electrical items in my house, with losses amounting to more than RM15,000.

Of note, a few of my neighbours also suffered some losses with electrical appliances roasted in another thunderstorm which took place a couple of weeks later. One neighbour's brick fence was also split in half.

The large trees around the area are the most probable suspects for the incidents. According to my neighbours who have been living in the area for more than three decades, there have been multiple lightning strikes in the vicinity, with tall fruit trees taking the hits.

Our street of private residences is surrounded by government quarters. As many would know,



government quarters are usually built on unfenced land. Hence, the houses have extremely large compounds. Irresponsible civil servants enjoying the free housing benefits tend to plant various large fruiting (e.g. coconut, durian, mango, rambutan, etc) and decorative trees in their compounds.

Sadly, they do not take responsibility in maintaining these trees, allowing them to grow into enormous proportions, towering over our houses.

After the civil servants have moved out, the new occupants also seldom find it necessary to remove the trees due to their large compound. Tall trees with water-filled trunks and deep roots are natural lightning rods. Apart from that, the

dried leaves, rotten fruits and the insect pests they attract are also a constant nuisance.

Our civil servant neighbours have repeatedly ignored our request to prune the trees in their compound. Also, our reports to Majlis Daerah Kota Tinggi (MDKT) to remove the large trees have fallen on deaf ears. Ironically, MDKT is situated on my street.

We sincerely hope that local authorities will regulate the planting of large trees within a housing estate, especially within a housing compound, and take immediate actions in removing such dangerous structures.

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