

Deluge of human indifference

DBKL will look into the overwhelming discovery of plastics and polystyrene packaging that were washed up during last Thursday's flash floods despite a ban that has been in place for two years. Meanwhile in Selangor, Sepang residents say stopgap measures will not end their flood woes. >2,3&4

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Floodwaters wash up littering habit

Lack of civic-mindedness congests system and costs more money for clean-up activities, say authorities

IT IS five days since Kuala Lumpur was inundated by floodwaters and is still reeling from the aftermath.

Waste contractors, who have the unenviable task of cleaning up the capital city, told *StarMetro* that work was "no where near over."

Waste was stuck along city drains, including monsoon drains.

Over the weekend, Alam Flora and private waste contractors were spotted cleaning the city drains.

Looking at photos of flood retention ponds filled with waste, Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Nor Hisham Ahmad Dahlan described them as "shocking".

Solid Waste Management and Public Cleansing Corporation Federal Territories director Mohd Zahir Shari said cleaning work by private contractors hired by Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) was ongoing.

"No doubt the recent flooding was caused by excessive rainfall with some areas recording between 100mm and 200mm, but we cannot ignore the overwhelming waste that was pulled out of drains and rivers," he added.

Last Thursday afternoon's flash flood was described by the authorities as "unprecedented" and "extremely rare", but the incident itself revealed some of the bad habits of city folk.

Evidence of their indiscriminate littering and lack of civic-mindedness washed up at the Batu retention pond in Jalan Ipoh.

Tonnes of waste consisting of plastic cups, bottles and bags, face masks and various other forms of rubbish ended up at the pond following the downpour.

They presented a shocking image that can only sum up human indifference.

Many questioned why this happened as Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) had banned the use of plastic and polystyrene containers.

"There should be less rubbish with all the public outreach programmes and educational campaigns."

"I am shocked by the amount of



Waste contractors had the gruelling task of manually removing plastic waste from the river bund at the River of Life site. — Photos: SAMUEL ONG & LOW LAY PHON/The Star

rubbish seen in the pictures shown to me," said Nor Hisham.

A DID spokesperson affirmed that the amount of rubbish was getting more rather than less.

"To be honest, it is quite normal to see mountains of rubbish end up at retention ponds particularly after a downpour, but it (rubbish) should be reducing, not increasing. "It is happening in all flood

retention ponds, not just at Batu.

"This is a result of people throwing rubbish indiscriminately and directly into the drains, which end up in monsoon drains, rivers and eventually into the sea.

"We normally intercept the rubbish, which ends up at the collection points where we have our gross pollutant traps, log booms and trash rake. Then our contrac-

tors will clean it up.

"But in the case of diverting floodwater, everything ends up at the retention pond and that is why there is a lot of rubbish there," he said.

Rubbish and silt also end up at the Nanyang, Wahyu, and Delima flood mitigation ponds.

The Batu and Jinjang retention ponds are part of a multi-million

(Above) The floods on Thursday affected many businesses, including restaurants, in Kuala Lumpur.



(Right) Nor Hisham was shocked to see photos of rubbish collected at flood retention ponds after last week's flash floods in Kuala Lumpur.

(Left) Plastic waste stuck to the crevices of the river bund is the hardest to remove, say waste contractors.

ringgit flood mitigation system built to prevent flooding from rivers in Kuala Lumpur bursting their banks and the Klang River basin overflowing.

The system that has been operational since 2009 diverts extra water from Sungai Gombak and Sungai Keroh into the Batu and Jinjang retention ponds.

On Thursday, the system was activated at about 2pm to divert water from Sungai Gombak into the retention ponds, and water was later released back into the river

after the rain stopped.

However, large amounts of rubbish and sediments ended up at the retention ponds.

"Clean-up efforts will take time but the amount of rubbish is also stressing out the system and cost money," said the spokesperson.

Alam Flora workers who were deployed to clean up the city over the recent weekend, complained of rubbish especially plastic almost in every nook and corner of the city drains and culverts.

Private contractors cleaning the

River of Life (RoL) project site at the lookout point at Medan Pasar area said more and more plastics were emerging and getting stuck along the sides of the river bunds.

"The thing about floodwater is that when it starts, there is no stopping it.

"And with the water comes rubbish, fish and even snakes," said a worker carrying out cleaning work at the RoL site.

"The only thing that remains after the rain is rubbish," he added.



(Above and left) Alam Flora workers spotted on the weekend cleaning drains and removing rubbish from manholes at the Medan Pasar area.

DBKL to increase surveillance on flash floods in the city

KUALA Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) will instal water level markers in flood-prone areas in the capital city soon.

Its Enforcement Department director Osman Ismail said the markers would indicate the depth of water in a particular area during floods.

"This will help us monitor and allow the public to be vigilant," he said.

He revealed that the department was finalising the locations for the markers and hoped to instal them by next week.

He added that DBKL would increase surveillance during the rainy season, with a 15-member rescue team on hand per shift in case of floods.

The squad is equipped with rescue boats, jet ski, scramblers and other equipment to carry out rescue operations.

A total of 18 locations in Kuala Lumpur were badly affected in last Thursday's flood, including Jalan Gurney 5, Jalan Genting Kelang and the area surrounding Masjid Jamek.

Some 100 families from Kampung Periuk were evacuated

and placed in temporary relief shelters.

Business proprietors and other stakeholders in Kuala Lumpur have said they are fed up with having to bear the brunt of frequent flooding in the city and are calling for a better drainage system.

So frequent have the floods been, that Lebu Ampang shopowners claim to be able to predict floods. Goldsmith A. Gunasegaran said on Thursday, many shop owners got prepared for floods when it rained for several hours.

"We could see the water in Sungai Klang rise up very fast and we moved our belongings to higher ground.

"Unfortunately, we could not save some of our heavy equipment.

"This is the second time I have had to send the equipment to Johor to be repaired and it will cost at least RM7,000 each," he said.

Having run his business at the same spot for 27 years, Gunasegaran said the situation worsened in the past 10 years.

"Something is very wrong with our infrastructure. "The authorities cannot blame



Loganathan was still cleaning up his shop, three days after the flooding.

only the heavy rains as this did not happen in the past," he said.

He blamed development and the outdated drainage systems.

Although he was glad to see Federal Territories Minister Tan Sri Annuar Musa visiting the affected areas, Gunasegaran said no solution was provided.

Another gold shop proprietor, Vincent Chong said there was significant damage in his shop due to the frequent flooding.



"In March alone, the shop was been flooded five times, the first being on the second day of the MCO.

"Although the water usually receded fast, this time it took almost an hour as the river overflowed its banks.

"The wooden panels inside the shop are rotting and it will be a hefty cost to constantly have them replaced," he said.

Chong, who has operated in Lebu Ampang for 30 years, said a

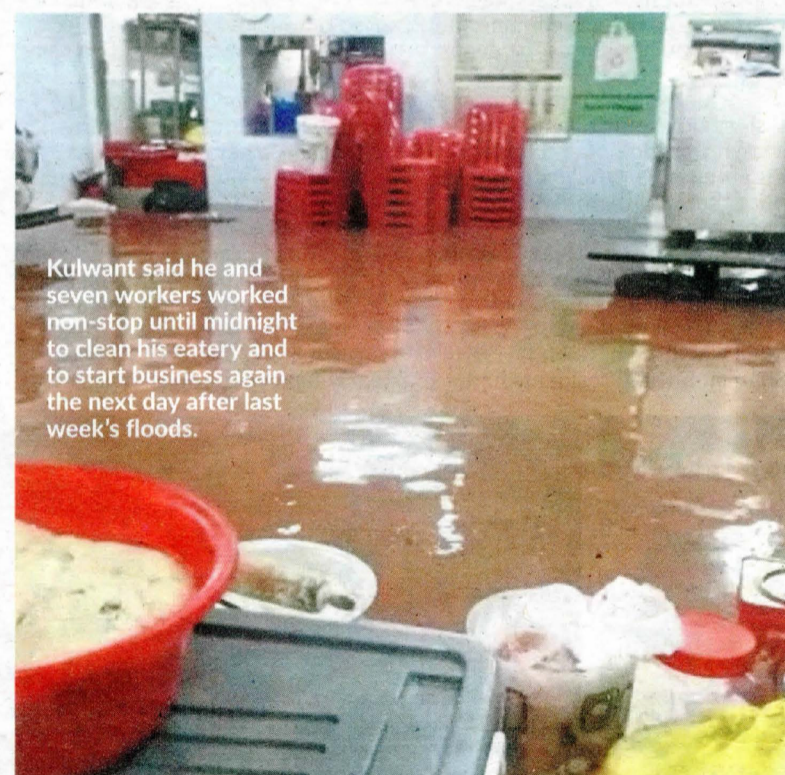


A liquor shop in Lebu Ampang had four chiller machines damaged by floodwaters that rose to almost waist high.

drainage and pedestrian walkway upgrading project two years ago did not help.

"DBKL widened the walkway and now the drain is covered by the pathway.

"We do not know if the drains are now too small or are clogged. "This is poor planning," he said.



Kulwant said he and seven workers worked non-stop until midnight to clean his eatery and to start business again the next day after last week's floods.

He added that the drainage holes could not cope with the water volume.

One of the worst affected is liquor shop owner Loganathan Katharayan who was still in the process of cleaning up his premises when met by *StarMetro* three days after the incident.

Four of his chiller machines were damaged beyond repair as water rose to almost waist high, he said, estimating his losses at almost RM20,000.

"As the shop is located at the lower end of a slope, all the water collected here.

"There was no time to rescue anything," he said. Kuala Lumpur Fire and Rescue



Gunasegaran has to spend over RM7,000 to repair two machines.

Department stated that floodwaters reached 1.5m in Lebu Ampang and 1m in other areas during Thursday's flash floods.

Restoran Santa Chapati House owner Kulwant Singh, whose eatery along Jalan Tun HS Lee was flooded with mud water on Thursday, said it took his crew of seven men working non-stop until midnight to get the premises back in business the next day.

"The water just came gushing in and went out the back way, taking my food stuff like vegetables and rice along with other things with it," he said, adding that cash was also lost.

Kulwant said it took a few hours for the water to subside and for them to clean the place of mud and silt.



Chong says there is significant damage in his shop due to frequent flooding.

It was the second time this year that his restaurant was flooded, he said.

Amin Jay, who owns Makan.buzz cafe that is located at the River of Life (RoL) Lookout point, said he and his staff were on standby to pack up after seeing Thursday's heavy rain.

"We were keeping a close eye on the river and the water just kept rising, but thankfully it stopped before it flowed over the riverbank.

"We have seen it before and water usually stops at the edge, but we are always ready to move out if necessary," added Amin.