

## High expectations

DBKL: Strata management must take on additional duties during viral outbreak



Bright spot: Menara City One condominium in Kuala Lumpur. — IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star

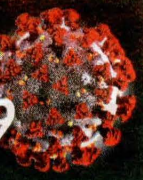
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IT WAS almost a year ago since the residents of Menara City One, Kuala Lumpur, experienced the enhanced movement control order.

For its management committee, that period was a steep learning curve from the moment it was implemented.

On March 31 last year, barbed wire fences went up around the residential building in Jalan Munshi Abdullah as it was placed under the enhanced MCO follow-

### Battling Covid-19



ing detection of 17 Covid-19 cases back then.

The building, housing some 3,200 residents, of whom about 60% are foreigners, was the first high-rise in the country to go under a comprehensive lockdown.

Its management committee

treasurer Dr Nik Nur Eliza Mohamed, who was one of two committee members living there at the time, recalled the pressure she was under due to massive inundation of enquiries from confused and panicked residents.

"I sometimes received hundreds of text messages in a day and had to respond to them one by one.

"I had to answer all of them because they relied on me to keep them informed," she said.

This experience, she highlighted, underscored the importance of proper communication between

building managements and residents amid a viral outbreak to ensure calm during the challenging period.

"What happened should serve as a lesson to others. We hope no one else will go through what we did," she added.

#### Disseminate information

Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) Health and Environment Department director Dr Umi Ahmad said joint management bodies and corporation had a role

in disseminating useful information amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Make use of social media to send updates about goings-on in your community.

"Management bodies should also identify which areas have the potential to spread the virus and relay this information to residents," she advised.

Dr Umi encouraged building managements to put up posters containing important health advice in common areas.

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She said these included tips on how to wear and dispose of face masks, ethics related to coughing and sneezing, proper hand-washing and vaccination information to encourage more people to sign up for the programme.

She added that they could visit [www.infosihat.gov.my](http://www.infosihat.gov.my) to get ideas on the type of information they could display.

DBKL Property Management and Valuation Department director Datuk Kamarulzaman Mat Salleh said the management of strata properties should give regular updates on which blocks had confirmed Covid-19 cases.

He, however, reminded the management to safeguard the privacy of patients and not disclose their details such as name and unit number.

"Always keep abreast of the latest announcements by the National Security Council (MKN), Health Ministry, Housing and Local Government Ministry (KPKT) and other relevant agencies.

"Regular disinfection exercises should be carried out when Covid-19 cases have been detected," he added.

Kamarulzaman and Dr Umi were speaking at a webinar organised by DBKL centred on the topic of strata management amid the pandemic.

It was attended by some 300 representatives from strata management bodies in Kuala Lumpur.

## Need to disinfect

Dr Umi recommended that building managements set aside a budget for disinfection exercises.

"This needs to be discussed among committee members.

"Such committees also need to ensure that personnel involved in the exercises are equipped with proper personal protective equipment.

"This is because the disinfectant used may be harmful to their lungs if inhaled," she said.

She reminded that sodium hypochlorite solution, which was often used for disinfections, must



Dr Umi: Joint management bodies can visit [www.infosihat.gov.my](http://www.infosihat.gov.my) to get ideas on the type of information to display.



Kamarulzaman: Building managements should not disclose details of residents who contracted Covid-19.

be diluted accordingly, depending on the intended location.

"If it is used for outdoor areas, one litre should be diluted with nine litres of water.

"But if it is to be used indoors, the concentration should be reduced even further to one in fifty," she said.

## Funding concerns

Kamarulzaman agreed with Dr Umi that building managements should consider approving additional funding to cover disinfection exercises at their next annual general meeting.

However, he acknowledged that according to a record kept by the DBKL Commissioner of Buildings, about 95% of some 5,800 strata schemes in Kuala Lumpur had been unable to hold such a meeting due to the ongoing MCO which prohibited public gatherings.

It was because of this, he said, that DBKL decided to launch a pilot project on March 3 and 7 at two residential high-rises to conduct the meeting online.

"We have obtained approval

from the NSC to do this.

"Some committee members will be in a meeting room physically but the number of people will be limited to one-third of the room capacity. The rest will attend the meeting online," he explained.

He added that the project was to study the effectiveness of the processes involved, such as registration and vote counting.

Kamarulzaman said management bodies could consider dipping into their sinking fund to cover the costs of disinfection exercises.

He said this step could be taken as part of their responsibility to safeguard the safety and health of residents.

As for the strata property management that had less funds to cover such unexpected but important expenditure, Dr Umi suggested that they focus on disinfecting common areas such as the lifts, stairways and corridors instead of the entire building.

## Community role

The arrival of the first batch of Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccines



Proper protective gear is required when carrying out sanitation. It is part of the cost of such an exercise which requires an allocation by the management committees of residential high-rises.  
— Photos: MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI/The Star

in Malaysia on Feb 21 has brought some hope that the virus can soon be brought under control.

However, Dr Umi warned the public against complacency, saying that "adherence to the standard operating procedure is still the best vaccine".

She reminded building management bodies to ensure regular and proper disposal of rubbish in order to prevent a virus outbreak in their area.

"They should also require visitors to register their details using the MySejahtera app and record their body temperature.

"Communities have a role to play to help the government break the chain of Covid-19 infections," she emphasised.

Meanwhile, Dr Nik Nur Eliza said cooperation between residents, their building management and the authorities was crucial during a lockdown.

"We only found out that 17 cases of Covid-19 had been detected at Menara City One after the enhanced MCO was announced.

"Before that, we only knew of six cases. We were not notified by others who had tested positive for Covid-19," she said.

She recalled the door-to-door surveillance conducted by Health Ministry personnel in the apartment building last year, where the authorities had to break down the doors of some units to identify their occupants.

This, she said, had upset the residents there.

"Owners of these units were not present because some had already left for quarantine while some were stranded overseas and unable to return.

"We then gave the authorities a list which contained details of which units were occupied and those that were not," she added.