



Broken by acts of vandalism

More costs will be incurred as Kuala Lumpur City Hall deals with book kiosks and bollards damaged by irresponsible people

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KUALA Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) plans to review its book kiosk initiative to prevent future random acts of vandalism.

The move came about following the end of Kuala Lumpur's run as World Book Capital 2020 (KLWBC2020) in April.

DBKL Project Implementation and Building Maintenance Department director Norzaini Noordin said the number of book kiosks in the city would be reduced because of damage and destruction wreaked by vandals.

She said severely vandalised and beyond-repair book kiosks would be removed.

DBKL's book committee would then

decide whether to retain or remove the kiosks in other areas, she added.

Last year, DBKL cleaned and repurposed old refrigerators and telephone booths of different sizes, sourced from dump yards, into book kiosks.

The local authority then set up 65 book kiosks in 19 locations in the city centre.

The book project was part of several initiatives carried out by City Hall to promote the reading culture in the country's capital.

It was to be launched on April 23, 2020 in conjunction with World Book Day, but it was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The project was revived when the movement control order (MCO) restrictions were lifted in phases.

The initiative is the brainchild of former

Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Nor Hisham Ahmad Dahlan who envisioned mini libraries in the city to inculcate the reading habit among city folk.

The opportunity to have kiosks filled with books all over the downtown area presented itself when Kuala Lumpur was named World Book Capital for 2020 by Unesco in 2018.

Throughout the year-long event, over 200 activities and events were held, mostly online due to the MCO.

"We never really had the chance to test them (book kiosks) out properly as we were in lockdown for most part of this year and last year," said Norzaini.

"With the restrictions and most businesses being closed and people working from home, we could not really gauge the popu-

larity of the project."

"Homeless people have taken over some of the kiosks, converting them into their private closets and storage space.

"We have plans to clear and keep kiosks that are still in good condition or which can be used with minor repairs," she added.

StarMetro reported last year that a number of the kiosks were vandalised barely two days after installation.

In our checks, it was found that many of these kiosks were vandalised or destroyed.

Some were used by the homeless as storage units for their personal belongings, while others had broken doors and were without books.

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Motorcyclists breaking rules despite repeated warnings

In some areas around the River of Life project (RoL) and Bukit Bintang, the kiosks were empty.

At other places, the kiosks' acrylic doors were smashed and power cables pulled out.

Feedback from the ground garnered mixed reviews, with some people supporting the kiosk project.

"Reading is good. I enjoy a book wherever I go," said Deena Devi from Cheras.

"But sometimes, the books in the kiosk are not to my liking.

"For instance, the book kiosk at the bus stop in front of the UniKL building near Kampung Baru only has books for kindergarten kids."

Stevan Shankar from Segambut echoed Deena's sentiments, saying that some kiosks had books on engineering and design.

"It looked like someone just decided to discard old books from the 1970s here. I am not interested in such books," he said.

Some city denizens complained that a few kiosks were placed in obscure sites and hidden from public walkways.

"The one in Merdeka Square is placed in an odd spot that even the security guards working in the area are not aware of it," said photographer A. Chen.

"It took me a while to find it, and when I did, I thought it was a large rubbish bin," he said.

Law student Seema Nair said she appreciated the book kiosks at familiar sites, but these days they were always empty.

"It never used to be that way, but people are now taking the books and not returning them," she noted.

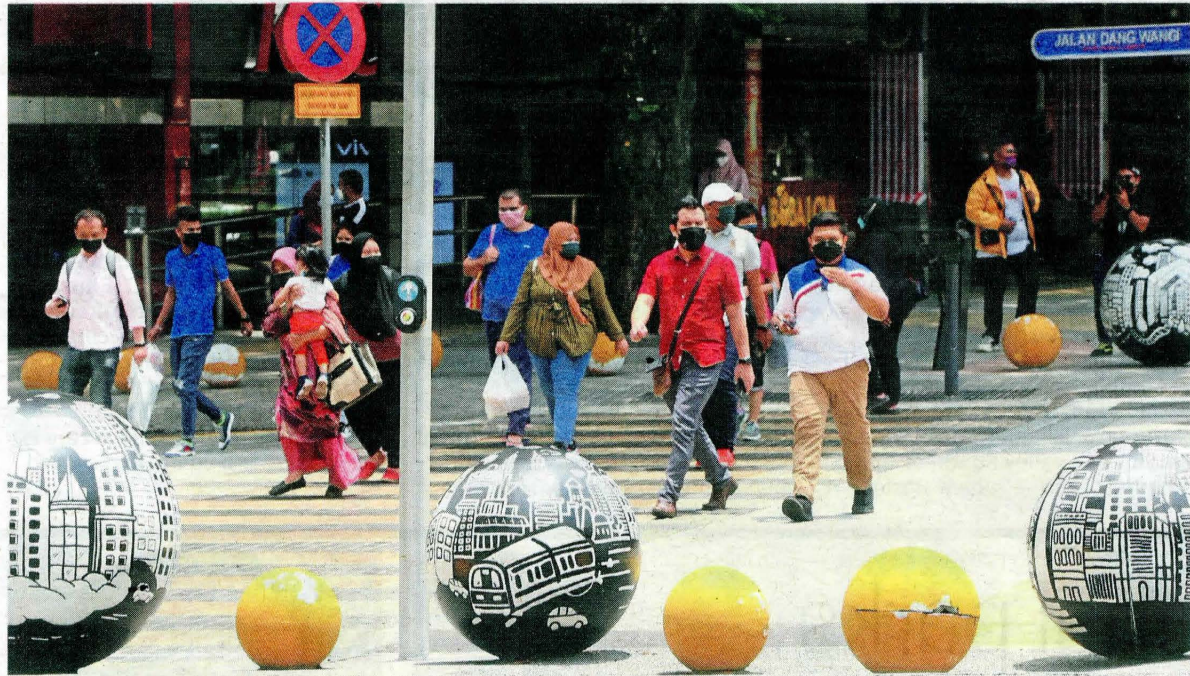
The initial locations for the book kiosks were along the city's heritage trails as well as the River of Life (RoL) areas, including Taman Tasik Titivangsa, Taman Botani Perdana, selected DBKL buildings, Kampung Baru, Chow Kit and Bukit Bintang.

More kiosk were later set up at Dataran DBKL, Jalan Ampang, Jalan Tiong Nam, Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Jalan Bonus 6, Jalan Masjid India, Masjid Jamek, Sultan Abdul Samad building, Jalan Ampang, Jalan Petaling, Jalan Panggung, Pasar Seni MRT, Merdeka Square, Jalan Cenderasari and Jalan Sultan Hishamuddin.

The entire project cost RM750,000, with each kiosk estimated to be about RM12,000.

Broken bollards

Apart from the vandalised book kiosks, security bollards placed on public walkways in downtown Kuala Lumpur to prevent motorcyclists and mobile traders from



While most of the security bollards are damaged by vehicles that encroach upon walkways, there are passers-by who scratch and mar their surfaces. — AZMAN GHANI/The Star

encroaching on such sites have also been damaged.

A recent *StarMetro* check in areas such as Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Kampung Baru and Ampang found many of the bollards either cracked, chipped or completely broken.

The concrete structures were run over by cars or motorcycles, while some looked like they were deliberately damaged or scratched by passers-by.

The bollards, like some of the book kiosks, will have to be removed while others may be replaced after repairs.

Despite repeated warnings and enforcement by Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL), motorcyclists continue to break the rules and ride over pedestrian walkways, endangering people and damaging security bollards.

With the sudden increase in the number of motorcycles, especially food delivery riders, pedestrians' complaints against them encroaching on walkways, sometimes narrowly missing people, are also on the rise.

DBKL's CCTV cameras around the city centre have captured those narrow misses, prompting the installation of the multi-coloured security bollards last year.

Norzaini said the bollards



Norzaini says DBKL could not gauge the popularity of the book kiosk project due to the lockdown.

served a dual purpose.

"Apart from preventing motorcyclists and mobile traders from being a menace on pedestrian walkways, the bollards also serve as street decoration.

"They are functional yet decorative, and add colour and character to the city," she said.

However, she regretted that it did not take long for them to be damaged, soon after they were put up.

In April, DBKL's CCTV camera captured images of a food delivery



Although in good condition, this book kiosk is left almost empty.

rider pushing onto the pedestrian walkway and hitting the bollards in his path.

One of the bollards was dislodged after being repeatedly run over and slid onto the busy road.



A book kiosk set up on a street behind Jalan Alor. The site used to be teeming with people but is now empty.



The kiosk in front of the Sultan Abdul Samad building is in an obscure spot, out of the view of passers-by.