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Year of tough situations tests KL residents' resolve

By BAVANI M

bavanim@thestar.com.my

IT HAS certainly been a year of ups and downs for all Kuala Lumpur folk.

Organisations, businesses and the residents have had to make changes and adapt since Phase Four of the National Recovery Plan was implemented on Oct 18.

Although businesses have slowly re-opened and government services are back on track, it has been a challenging year.

Over the past 12 months, there have been decisions made by the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) that have impacted the lifestyles of residents and the earnings of business owners.

Here is a recap of issues that made headlines this year.

Flood woes

One of the most devastating incidents of the year was the massive flood that hit the capital during the third week of December.

Nothing could have prepared residents for the devastation, which has been compared by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah to the flood disaster of 1971.

At least 73 sites in the city suffered landslides and about 24 areas suffered damaged infrastructure and underwent massive clean-up exercises.

About 1,400 personnel from various agencies were involved in the clean-up, repair and rescue works.

KL hits herd immunity

Kuala Lumpur was declared as having achieved herd immunity on Aug 15 after 85% of its adult population vaccinated against Covid-19.

Some 1.5 million of its adult population received both doses of the vaccine, exceeding the 80% target.

Malaysia Cup win

Kuala Lumpur's 32-year wait for the Malaysia Cup title ended after its team beat Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) 2-0 in the Malaysia Cup final at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil on Nov 30.

The last time KL City won the country's oldest football trophy was in 1989.

It was no doubt a significant win as the team won the title on the competition's 100th anniversary, prompting the Federal Territories Ministry to declare Dec 3 a public holiday for Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan.

Booze brouhaha

After much uproar over the new licensing requirements for the sale of hard liquor, the Federal Territories Ministry is standing by its move to disallow selected outlets from selling hard liquor, much to the dismay of traders involved.

Its minister Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim reiterated his stand that sundry shops, convenience stores and Chinese medical halls would not be permitted to sell hard liquor.

The liquor sale restriction, which excluded beer, was initially set to be enforced on Oct 1, but eventually took effect on Nov 1.

On Dec 2, Shahidan explained in



Discarded furniture and appliances along a road in Kampung Pasir, Kuala Lumpur show the degree of damage caused by last weekend's flood.



Stalls have mushroomed in Bandar Tun Razak after DBKL encouraged free trade zones.

Parliament that if applications for the liquor licence renewal were rejected based on the new guidelines, applicants could appeal to the Excise Licensing Board of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur.

Ironically, the new guidelines restricting hard liquor sales, which he mentioned, have not been issued in black and white.

However, from what we gathered from DBKL, the guidelines are pretty much the same as before, other than the ban imposed on those retail outlets.

Stakeholders like the Selangor Kuala Lumpur Wine and Spirit Dealers Association and Federal Territory and Selangor Chinese Medicine/Drug Dealers Association expressed disappointment at the decision.

Persistent leaks

Residents of relatively new housing project PPR Sri Aman in

Kepong are emotionally drained from living with incessant water leaks in their homes.

Four months after the issue was first highlighted, the matter has yet to be addressed by DBKL or the Housing and Local Government Ministry.

After the leaks worsened over a month, Batu MP P. Prabakaran raised the matter in Parliament, but it did not garner much response in the august House.

A Star TV video showing the extent of the damage at the flats went viral, chalking over 230,000 views as of Dec 16.

Yet no officials from the Federal Territories Ministry, Housing and Local Government Ministry or DBKL showed up to assess the damage at the affected 500 units.

The authorities responded saying they were only responsible for tenanted units and not those sold to residents.

Their response was not accepted

by those affected, especially after independent engineers, contractors and private building services consultants identified the problem as a major piping defect.

Free trade zone

In November last year, the Federal Territories Ministry, under then minister Tan Sri Annuar Musa, allowed residents of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan to trade freely at any location within their respective federal territory.

The initiative called the Wilayah Bebas Berniaga (Federal Territories' Free Trade Zone) was initially only meant to last until April this year, but was extended until Dec 31.

Under the initiative, over 5,000 licences were approved in all three federal territories with the aim of giving Malaysians with the opportunity to earn a living

As a result of that, the number of

street vendors in the federal capital has been mushrooming each month.

Based on DBKL's records, Bandar Tun Razak recorded the highest number of applications.

It is learnt that the initiative will be extended to 2022, although it has received many brickbats for creating various social and environmental problems, such as littering, dumping of fats, oil and grease into drains, noise and air pollution as well as congestion.

There are, however, plans to ensure that things are better managed and coordinated.

Unable to cash out

Another story that made the headlines was the DBKL officers' cooperative scandal.

The cooperative's management board's unproductive investments left its coffers empty, leaving retired members who wanted to cash out in the lurch.

The liquidity crisis was detected in 2018 when retired members applied to withdraw their funds and were shocked when told there was no money.

Over 1,000 members, some who have been saving through the cooperative since the 1980s, indicated that they want the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate the matter.

Reports have also been lodged with the Cooperative Commission of Malaysia (SKM).

Cooperative chairman Datuk Kamarulzaman Mat Salleh said it was facing a liquidity crisis that made it difficult for it to meet its financial obligations.

Kamarulzaman said due to past investments that did not bring any profit or revenue, it has been hard for the cooperative to meet its running costs, hence the delay in payment to members until the cash flow issue was settled.



Chinese medicine shops in Kuala Lumpur are now barred from selling hard liquor.

The matter is currently being heard by the SKM tribunal.

Low-carbon township

This year, Wangsa Maju became the first eco-conscious township in Kuala Lumpur through a pilot project spearheaded by DBKL's Project Implementation and Building Department.

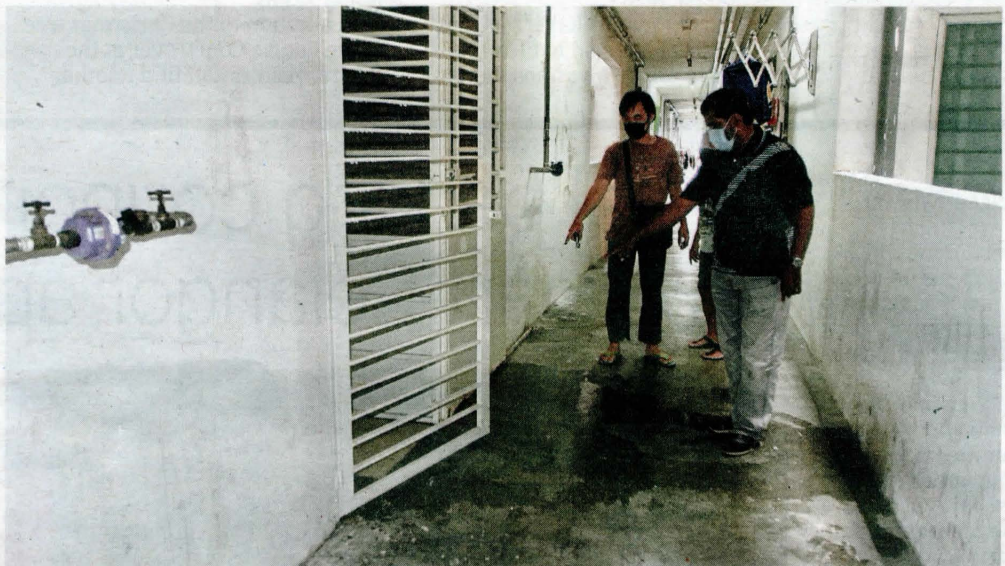
Mayor Datuk Seri Mahadi Che Ngah, who was instrumental in getting the project started, said he wanted the Section 1 community to experience the benefits of living in an eco-friendly township.

Mahadi said Section 1 residents

could expect better living conditions and air quality, cleaner rivers, reduced congestion and lower electricity bills.

The township was chosen because it is a mature neighbourhood with public facilities such as schools, business centres, and transportation hubs.

The work included constructing a network of pedestrian walkways, jogging tracks and bicycle paths, creating more recreational parks, converting empty spaces into landscaped gardens or urban farms and switching to solar power to help reduce electricity consumption.



PPR Sri Aman residents showing the water leakage and structural problems at one of many affected units.

(Below) The Tzu Chi recycling centre in Taman Danau Desa has been ordered to vacate the land.



End of the road for recycling centre

A community recycling centre operating in Taman Danau Desa for over a decade, received notice to vacate.

Tzu Chi Foundation Malaysia, which took over the running of the centre 11 years ago, now also has a

community garden there.

Community members and volunteers were devastated by this notice as the space has been an education hub to encourage green living.

It is also a space where elderly folk gather to sort recyclables and keep their minds engaged.

The Tzu Chi Taman Desa Recycle Collection Centre has until the end of January next year to relocate.

Taman Desa Residents Association (TDRA) chairman Wong Chan Choy said they would continue to look out for new plots of land in the neighbourhood to carry out their activities.