

**Stopping the overflow:**

Sandbags have been placed along Sungai Batu in Kampung Kasipillay off Jalan Ipoh as part of DBKL's flood mitigation measures. — AZLINA ABDULLAH/  
The Star

# Long view on flood control

Stakeholders want lasting solutions to be implemented alongside the recently announced short-term measures by Kuala Lumpur City Hall to ensure future inundations are prevented altogether >2&3





High water level at Sungai Klang as a result of heavy rain earlier in the day. Activists say urban development has changed the natural topography of Kuala Lumpur, thus reducing the city's ability to absorb rainwater. — Filepic

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# 'Find holistic approach to ending floods for good'

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## Review entire city infrastructure and eco-system in light of new climate norm, urge stakeholders

KUALA Lumpur residents are filled with dread each time it rains.

Over the past few months, many parts of the city have been inundated after a downpour, wreaking havoc in its wake.

In response, Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) has unveiled short-term measures costing RM10mil to tackle the problem.

The measures include upgrading scupper drains, placing sandbags along riverbanks, desilting retention ponds and building new sump pumps.

Stakeholders say while these measures are a step in the right direction, a more holistic plan is needed to resolve the issue permanently.

### Improve development control

Alliance for Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said DBKL should ensure that developers always complied with the conditions stipulated in a development order.

This document – which outlines the technical specifications and requirements of a project – is issued after a review by the DBKL planning committee.

Among common requirements, noted Lee, were building temporary drains to divert water and silt traps to capture on-site debris.

He said while companies usually comply during the initial construction stage, they tend to grow lax as their project progresses.

"Over time, the drains become clogged with debris and the silt traps are not serviced properly.

"DBKL must ensure that such assets remain in good condition and operable throughout the construction period," he added.

Town planner Ihsan Zainal Mohtar said the authorities should review existing engineering standards to deal with changing weather patterns.

"We need to adapt to the new environmental norms and rethink



Cars going through floodwaters in Dataran Merdeka after a downpour in the city centre on April 25. — Filepic

the design of drains and provisions for retention and detention ponds, among other things," he said.

"An overhaul of the drainage master plan to include more SMART tunnels may be needed."

Global Environment Centre river care programme coordinator Dr K. Kalithasan urged DBKL to stop all land-clearing activities near rivers.

He said sludge and sediment from such project sites were being discharged into natural waterways, which reduced their carrying capacity.

"This results in more work for the authorities, as they have to deepen waterways and build retention walls," he added.

He also noted that the sprawling urban landscape had altered Kuala Lumpur's natural topography, replacing it with artificial surfaces.

This situation, he said, had

decreased the city's ability to absorb and retain rainwater.

"Water needs space too and soil acts as an absorbent.

"Without it, the excess water has nowhere to flow to," he explained.

### Inject more funds

Recent floods – which activists attribute to climate change – have renewed a push among the public to limit the scale of physical developments in the city.

Ihsan, however, said there was a need to balance environmental concerns with developmental and economic needs.

"DBKL, as a local authority, generates an income by collecting development and planning fees from projects.

"The monies from these projects are used to provide services and maintain facilities in the city," he said.

Ihsan explained that higher density was not necessarily bad for the environment, provided there was proper planning.

Lee, meanwhile, said substantial financial support from the Federal Government was needed to fund a comprehensive flood mitigation plan.

He also questioned if the RM10mil allocated by DBKL in its recent announcement was enough to service the entire city.

"DBKL is just a local government. It does not have the budget to undertake a plan on such a massive scale," he added.

On April 27, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob reportedly ordered DBKL to take immediate measures to tackle floods.

Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Dr Shahidan Kassim told the media that the premier agreed to reimburse the amount spent by City Hall.

### Engage local communities

Save Kuala Lumpur, a local government watchdog, urged DBKL to work with residents associations to better understand local needs.

Its chairman Datuk M. Ali said regular meetings should be held for residents to give their views to DBKL.

"Locals know better than DBKL which parts of their area are at a higher risk of flooding and thus, can suggest improvements.

"This allows DBKL to take proactive measures to tackle the problem instead of acting only after a complaint is lodged," he said.

For example, the retention pond in Lorong Maarof, which services the upper part of Bangsar such as Bukit Damansara and Bukit Bandaraya, would overflow during a downpour to surrounding roads.

"Only when residents complain would DBKL personnel come to





Some are concerned that projects allowed to take place near rivers or ponds could result in sediment flowing into the water, thus reducing capacity to hold rainwater. — Filepic

desilt the pond.

A proper schedule should be drawn up to ensure regular maintenance," Ali added.

When asked why residents did not channel concerns to the respective MPs, Ali said solving neighbourhood matters was not an MP's main task.

"MPs are supposed to deliberate on broader national issues, not check on drains and roads," he said.

On April 27, Shahidan announced that pumps would be mobilised to flooded areas to divert water to detention ponds.

He also said DBKL personnel would be stationed at 25 flood hot-spots to clear scupper drains to ensure unobstructed water flow.

Community activist Yee Poh Ping, however, questioned if these actions were a productive use of funds by DBKL.

"These mechanical devices need regular maintenance which incurs additional costs.

"That money can be better spent on a more permanent solution such as building retention walls

along rivers," he said.

### Cultivate stronger cooperation

A spate of flash floods have hit Kuala Lumpur in recent months.

The latest major flood on April 27 inundated several areas in and around Pudu, causing traffic delays in both directions from Pudu and towards Bulatan Merdeka.

Two days earlier, several major roads were submerged after a downpour that started at 3pm.

It was reported that rainfall exceeded 80mm, with several areas recording more than 100mm of rain per hour.

According to the Drainage and Irrigation Department, a rainfall is categorised as drizzle (1-10mm), light rain (11-30mm), heavy rain (31-60mm) and downpour (>60mm).

Kalithasan stressed that higher rainfall in recent months should not be used as an excuse to explain away flood incidents.

"Many warnings have been issued about the impact of climate

change and Kuala Lumpur has not been spared," he said.

Ihsan said dealing with environmental matters called for enhanced interstate cooperation at all government levels instead of authorities working in silos.

For example, rivers can flow across several states and deforestation activities affect neighbouring states too.

"The environmental impact in one place will have wide-ranging consequences on other places.

"Take the rivers for example. Any activities upstream will likely affect downstream areas."

On March 7, a two-hour downpour again brought traffic to a halt in many areas.

City bus provider RapidKL announced a temporary closure of several routes as floodwaters left many roads impassable.

A flood on Dec 18 last year was described by experts as a one-in-100-year weather event.

A downpour that exceeded a month's worth of rainfall in just 24 hours caused 10 landslides in the city, according to DBKL.



A landslide occurred at Bukit Nanas Forest Reserve early this year after a downpour. — Filepic



Yee (right) and residents showing the drainage system in Jinjang Selatan that is unable to cope with high water levels during floods.