

Blocked path:
Hawkers have set up stalls on a public walkway along Jalan 14/155C in Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur — YAP CHEE HONG/The Star



Trading convenience for cleanliness

Residents of a gated community and low-cost flats in Bukit Jalil want DBKL to move roadside traders to a more conducive place and spruce up the area.

By BAVANI M
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WHEN Patricia Choi bought her RM1.4mil terrace house in Laman Bayu, a low-density gated community in Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur five years ago, she was expecting exclusivity and peace of mind.

But foul smells emanating from drains nearby, rats, snakes, rubbish and noise pollution are some of the issues she has had to put

up with today at her home.

Her corner unit faces Jalan 14/155C, which is one of the most congested roads in the township and connects to many apartments, condos, schools and shops.

Roadside hawkers selling food and groceries have set up stalls on the public walkway outside the gated residential area.

Some have even built permanent structures complete with door, grilles and kitchen as well as placed tables and lights along

the stretch.

As some of the hawkers live next door at Apartment Sri Rakyat, the low-cost flats just 200m from Laman Bayu, the stalls have access to running water and electricity through illegal connections to the units.

The stalls operate from noon to midnight, with some continuing up to 5am, causing congestion and noise pollution for both Laman Bayu and Sri Rakyat residents.

"Every night, I can hear the din from the stalls, people shouting and laughing all through the night and this is affecting my sleep and peace of mind," Choi complained.

However, she is not the only resident upset by these environmental and social problems.

More than 100 residents living in the 40-unit gated community are unhappy about these same issues exacerbated by the presence of roadside hawkers.

"The road is constantly choked with traffic, especially during peak hours," said Ann Lee, another resident.

"And people double-park along the stretch to buy food and have their lunch or dinner."

"Food is thrown into the drains and there are no grease traps in place, so now the rat population has grown so much that it is encroaching on my property."

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Some traders operating stalls outside Apartment Sri Rakyat are tapping electricity from their units. — Photos: IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star



Traders have violated DBKL licensing requirements by placing tables along the public walkways in front of Laman Bayu.



Kua removing the floor mats placed by traders over drain covers along the walkway.

DBKL notices to remove obstructions ignored

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Laman Bayu property manager Jacky Kua pointed out that the congestion in the area might also hamper the movement of ambulance and fire and rescue services in the event of an emergency.

"Many old abandoned stalls with chairs and tables nailed to the ground are also blocking the walkway," he said.

He added that even the Apartment Sri Rakyat Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) sub-station's main entrance was blocked by illegally built structures.

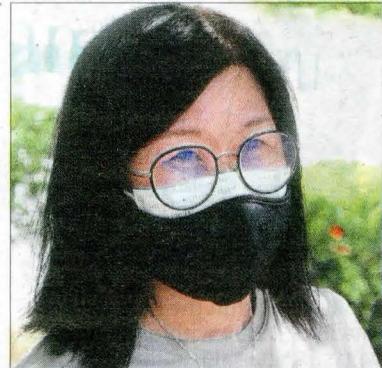
Currently, the sub-station is only accessible from inside Laman Bayu's compound.

Laman Bayu residents are paying between RM670 and RM900 each in monthly maintenance fees and almost RM1,000 in assessment taxes to Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) every year.

"They are expecting a clean and pollution-free environment so they feel short-changed," added Kua.

Meanwhile, Apartment Sri Rakyat management corporation (MC) chairman Osman Hamzah said he understands what the people at Laman Bayu were going through and sympathised with them.

"Sri Rakyat is facing the same



Lee says the road is constantly choked with traffic, especially during peak hours.

issues, probably even worse than this.

"There are thousands of people living here, but these traders are operating on a public walkway outside our jurisdiction and discharging food waste into our drains.

"This is an enforcement issue and I have been waiting for months for an answer from DBKL after alerting it about this," he added.

There are 1,098 units in Apartment Sri Rakyat, which residents bought in 1999 and received vacant possession in February 2003.

Osman said the stalls started operating when the apartment was opened for occupancy.



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Sri Rakyat resident Nizam Idris, who is also a member of the MC, said only about 10 traders operating at the site were licensed.

"The rest are either foreigners operating on a sublet licence or have no licence to trade.

"There is nothing we can do about it as they are operating outside the apartment's premises," Nizam said.

When *StarMetro* visited the site recently at noon, the roads were congested and it created a tailback.

While the road is a main artery for businesses, there were many people who also parked their vehicles along the kerb to have lunch at

the stalls.

The stalls with built-in kitchens appear to be directly discharging waste into the drains, with some blocking the drains on Sri Rakyat's side.

Polypipes were spotted running inside the drains and electric cables hanging overhead from Apartment Sri Rakyat to the stalls.

Drain covers along the walkway were covered with floor mats to prevent rats from coming out in search of food.

Laman Bayu residents highlighted that the mats were preventing water from flowing into the drains.

There was also an office set-up by Sri Rakyat's Rukun Tetangga, with a conference table placed right in the middle of the walkway.

Fresh notices pasted on June 30 by DBKL asking traders to remove the obstructions are in plain view.

Following these numerous concerns, Laman Bayu Bukit Jalil Joint Management Body (JMB) submitted a petition to DBKL and the Federal Territories Ministry on April 1 calling for the removal of the roadside stalls.

"DBKL responded in writing, confirming that the stalls were illegal and causing an obstruction and action will be taken against them," Kua said.

When contacted, a DBKL officer

from the Seputeh branch said out of 36 traders, 16 were legal, while the rest were operating without a licence.

"However, many have violated multiple licensing requirements under the Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974 for obstruction.

"Notices have been pasted on the respective stalls on June 30 to immediately remove the obstructions," the officer said.

A recent check showed that traders were still operating as usual.

Meanwhile, TNB issued a statement in response to Apartment Sri Rakyat residents tapping electricity from their units for nearby stalls.

"The public is advised not to tap electricity from their residential units to nearby stalls.

"It is an unsafe act, but TNB has no authority to stop residents from doing so.

"TNB's jurisdiction is up to the TNB electricity meter.

"However, TNB has notified the regulator, the Energy Commission, for their further action," it said.

■ **Look out for *StarMetro*'s cover story tomorrow on an abandoned food court project which was intended to boost the income of Apartment Sri Rakyat's low-income folk, but is a health hazard and eyesore today.**