

Offence to obstruct escape routes: Fire Dept

► Flat residents told to remove grilles along corridors, stairways that block access to safety during fire

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: The Fire and Rescue Department has warned flat dwellers to remove grilles they have installed in corridors and stairways as these fixtures, meant to keep out trespassers, block access to safety if a fire breaks out.

Assistant Fire Commissioner Mohamadul Ehsan Mohd Zain said in the case of highrises, local authorities disallow any modifications to the escape route that could obstruct evacuation, deeming it a punishable offence.

"Escape routes fall under the fire department and are governed by our Fire Hazard Prevention Operations. Hence, we strictly prohibit any hindrance to them."

Mohamadul Ehsan said such hindrances violate Section 2 of the Fire Services Act 1988, which specifically governs exits in buildings, as they prevent escape in the event of a fire.

"If we find there are grilles that impede escape, we will issue a notice of removal to the unit owner. We do not have the authority to break grilles except for emergency or fire as its removal comes under the local authority.

"However, if residents persist on having such obstructions, we will escalate the case to the prosecution department to take the matter to court," he said.

Mohamadul Ehsan said under Act 341, individuals who fail to remove obstructions that hinder fire escapes could be fined up to RM5,000, or jailed up to three years, or both.

Offenders are also liable to an additional fine of RM100 for each day the offence continues.

Some unit owners affix safety grilles to keep out trespassers. This has caused dissatisfaction among other residents, prompting them to vent their frustration by scribbling on nearby walls, urging those responsible to remove such grilles.

A message on the wall of a



This safety grille, which impedes access to the common corridor and blocks access to safety in the event of a fire, has riled some residents, who left an angry message on the wall next to it.

Wangsa Maju Section 2 flat conveys the plea of residents affected by a corridor grille.

During a check by *theSun* at the particular block, a 25-year-old part-time rider who asked to be identified only as Haris, said he had to deliver food orders to the left

wing but mistakenly used the right-wing staircase that has the grille blocking the corridor.

"I have to walk down and then climb the left-wing staircase to deliver the food. It is such a waste of time and energy," he lamented.

Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) said it conducted a site visit together with the Kuala Lumpur Building Commissioner (COBKL) on Jan 9 and discovered that several units had been renovated to include installation of grilles.

"We have given the owners 14 days from Jan 10 to remove the grilles. COBKL has also sent a letter to the management office, directing it to address the unit owners concerned and have the modifications removed."