

# Public against Sungai Bunus retention pond degazettement

SINCE their retirement, Osman Ismail and his wife, Normawan Ismail, both aged 64, dedicate a few hours daily to gardening work at the Kebun Bandar Sungai Bunus (PKBSB), situated near Jalan Tun Razak in Kuala Lumpur.

The retired civil servants reside in Setapak Indah and journey each day to care for a parcel of land owned by Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) adjacent to the Sungai Bunus flood retention pond, formerly known as Kampung Boyan.

This couple finds joy not only in the physical activity but also cherishes the clean air and enchanting sounds of nature, a rarity within the urban landscape.

“It provides us with a purpose and keeps us mentally and physically invigorated,” Normawan said.

In the same vicinity, Angela Lau is often observed performing basic tasks in the same community garden.

“Whether it’s pruning, weeding or watering, it reduces my anxiety; it’s immensely therapeutic,” Lau told *StarMetro*.

Shamsul Baharin Mohd Hanafiah, a founding member of the urban farm initiative, recalls the overgrown state of the area during the construction of the Sungai Bunus flood retention pond in 2013.

“This area was known for flooding.

“To alleviate this, the Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) erected a river diversion system and established the retention basin.

“We saw the opportunity to transform the land around the pond for urban farming and with the support of DBKL through the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) programme, this space has become a source of inspiration and well-being for many over the past decade,” Shamsul added.

Elena Shim Mei Yun, an ardent cyclist and member of Friends of Sungai Bunus, shares her enthusiasm for discovering the cycling trail along the river.

The cycling and pedestrian path extends for 13km.

“The unspoiled allure of this area was captivating. My explorations in 2016 uncovered hidden treasures, such as the Ayer Panas Hot Spring near a condominium.

“I discovered a direct link from SM Vokasional Setapak to Sungai Bunus Rukun Tetangga, which offers an ideal setting for children to learn to cycle and serves as a perfect spot for family outings,” Shim said.

“The area is teeming with wildlife, including a resident Brahminy kite known to swoop down by the river to hunt and a blue-throated kingfisher and egrets that visit near the Pulapol area,” she said.

The garden itself, spanning approximately 122m in length, is segmented into 10 plots, cultivated and sustained by a



Osman (right) and Normawan dedicate a few hours daily to do gardening at the Kebun Bandar Sungai Bunus. —Photos: AHMAD IZARAFIQUE/The Star



Lau enjoys the therapy of working at the community garden.



Shamsul Baharin recalls the overgrown state of the area during construction of Sungai Bunus flood retention pond.

diverse group including local residents, non-governmental organisations, educational institutions and private corporations.

Recent news concerning the potential degazettement of land surrounding Sungai Bunus flood retention pond has unsettled stakeholders, who fear it could lead to development plans or land sale.

However, DBKL had clarified that the proposed revocation of the land status was not intended for commercial or housing developments, but to streamline the land classification, with one segment earmarked as a “flood retention pond” and the other as an “open area.”

“The proposed revocation is to better streamline the areas of responsibilities between the related government agencies.

“In this case, it involves the DID for the flood retention pond and DBKL for the management and maintenance of the open space area,” DBKL had said.

Sungai Bunus retention pond, gazetted as an impounding reservoir on July 31, 2018, is nestled alongside Sungai Bunus and spans over a 5.25ha area – about the size of eight football fields.

The local authority has also engaged professional land surveyors to delineate the boundaries, including a 1m margin from the pond’s edge to safeguard against any impact on its



StarMetro’s cover story on Jan 6, 2024 about Sungai Bunus retention pond possibly being degazetted.

capacity or functionality.

DBKL added that the space encircling the pond had been developed into a communal garden by DBKL under LA21 Kuala Lumpur initiative, in partnership with NGOs and residents’ associations.

DBKL assured that any land reclassification would proceed only after securing consent from Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur Land Committee (JKTWPKL).

Nonetheless, there are dissenting voices, such as planning lawyer Derek Fernandez, who questioned the necessity of altering the land’s designation.

“Revoking the status of the flood retention pond seems unwarranted if the stated intentions are genuine.

“Open spaces serve as a buffer during potential overflows and are integral to the flood management system,” Fernandez said.

StarMetro recently reported on the issuance of a Federal Government Gazette notification by JKTWPKL regarding the proposed cancellation of the land’s public utility reservation, a decision which has sparked widespread opposition from concerned stakeholders. — By BAVANI M