



A Doraemon mascot entertaining children in the centre of Jalan TAR on Sunday. — Photos: IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star

No plans to change tack

Sunday closure continues at Jalan TAR but DBKL taking steps to mitigate retailers' concerns by improving parking access, traffic flow

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IT HAS been two years since the weekly Sunday closure of Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman (Jalan TAR) in Kuala Lumpur was implemented.

Business owners in the area are asking for a review of the decision, as they have had to face difficulties since the road is turned into a pedestrian mall once a week.

Retailers said the closure of the road running through a major shopping district had not brought about the desired impact and was affecting their business on what was typically the most lucrative day of the week.

But while they expressed concerns over dwindling foot traffic and its adverse effects on sales, shoppers appreciated the reduced traffic congestion.

The road closure was implemented by Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) from 6am to midnight every Sunday, and took effect on Aug 28, 2022.

The closure is from the Sogo shopping centre at the Jalan Esfahan junction until the Jalan Melayu intersection.

Reconsider closure

Two retail groups – the Batu Road Retailers Association (Barra) and Masjid India Business Association (Miba) – are urging DBKL to reconsider the Jalan TAR road closure.

Barra's head of communications Datin Rohana Mohammad Nasir said the retailers at Jalan TAR, Lorong TAR, and Jalan Masjid India recorded significant financial losses every Sunday due to lacklustre shopping activities, including sale of food.

Barra was established in 2014 and represents some 300



Rohana (right) and Bhavesh want DBKL to reconsider the Sunday road closure.

businesses in Jalan TAR.

"This is very significant compared to before the closure of the road in September 2022.

"We estimate that the businesses, from department stores, carpet retailers and budget hotels to restaurants, are seeing a 50% loss," she said.

Rohana said those who came to do shopping were reluctant to rely on public transport due to fatigue and difficulty carrying purchases back to train stations.

"For big families, it would cost them more to take public transport, not to mention the hassle.

"Wholesalers and retailers alike are feeling the pinch, as customers find it difficult to load and unload wholesale purchases.

"There are almost 4,000 parking bays around Jalan TAR, Lorong TAR and Lorong Gombak that are open on weekends," she said.

Barra committee member M. Bhavesh said the inconvenience of loading and unloading supplies along Lorong TAR was made worse by petty traders who were

allowed to set up stall at the narrow back lanes.

Bhavesh, who is Harisons general manager, said safety concerns had not been prioritised.

"With the main road closed on Sundays and the Lorong TAR taken up by petty traders, the shops' front and back entrances are blocked.

"If there is an emergency, everyone is trapped," he said.

He also said the five-foot way along Jalan TAR was wide and spacious enough for pedestrians and they need not walk on the road.

Sticking to its guns

The issues faced by retailers were raised with Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Kamarulzaman Mat Salleh during his site visit on Dec 16 last year with Barra and Miba representatives.

DBKL Culture, Arts, Tourism and Sports Department director Naquib Hamdan responded in a letter dated March 5 to Barra and Miba, saying that Jalan TAR



Nazirah, who visits Jalan TAR almost every other weekend, says it is safer to shop without the traffic.



Mohd Nizam does not find the road closure a hassle.

would continue to be closed every Sunday.

"The closure is in line with DBKL's Low-Carbon Society Masterplan to reduce carbon emissions up to 70% by 2030.

"The initiative has also received positive support from the public." It added that DBKL would take steps to ensure the closure would not affect retailers' business.

The measures include rear-ranging food truck operators and other stalls at Lorong TAR to improve carpark access and



Jalan TAR retailers say the road closure is a hassle for wholesalers loading and unloading their merchandise.



Some Jalan TAR visitors say the road closure made it safer, especially for children, when shopping in the popular area.

traffic flow.

"A 'towing zone' signage will also be installed to alert the public about enforcement action.

"Stricter enforcement will be carried out to address traffic congestion and parking issues."

The closure was initially mooted by DBKL in 2019, but failed to materialise after shopowners mounted a campaign to get authorities to abort the plan, as it affected more than 200 shops in the shopping district.

It was eventually implemented in 2022, with then deputy Federal Territories minister Datuk Seri Jalaluddin Alias saying the idea was to encourage the culture of walking among city folk.

He had said that activities planned for the pedestrian zone included busking, creative art performances, and traditional sports programmes.

StarMetro reached out to DBKL on the matter but the latter did not respond to the inquiries.

Its advisory board member Andre Lai, who made a site visit at the behest of the retailers, said more effort should be put into attracting visitors to Jalan TAR.

"When the road closure was first introduced, there were plans by DBKL to have pop-up kiosks and activities on the main road.

"This was meant to liven up the area and entice people to come. However, according to the retailers, this has fizzled out," he said.

On safety concerns brought up by the retailers, Lai said it was a serious matter.

"During my visit in March, most of the shops' rear entrances were blocked by night market

and bazaar traders.

"While I believe petty traders' businesses should flourish, we should not compromise the rights of the shopowners who have hefty expenses and paid taxes for their premises.

"The service lanes are also not available on weekends as the Saturday night market is operating there," he told *StarMetro*. Lai said there were available areas around Jalan TAR where such petty traders could be relocated to.

"There needs to be a serious effort to reorganise these petty traders into a better and more conducive environment, although the effort is not seen at the moment," he added.

Following the site visit, Lai said a meeting was held with retail association representatives and DBKL executive director (Socio-Economic Development) Ismadi Sakirin.

"Once the Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration is over, we will have an engagement session with the parties involved.

"I am sure this place can be happening again if we do proper planning.

"We shall bring this up to the mayor's attention as soon as possible," said Lai.

Pros and cons

Visitors whom *StarMetro* spoke to, said they had gotten used to the weekly road closure and had adapted to it.

Nazirah Mazlan, 32, who visits Jalan TAR almost every other weekend, said it was safer to shop



Shoppers sitting on the kerb to take a breather, without worrying about passing vehicles.



The road closure is from the Jalan Esfahan junction until the Jalan Melayu intersection.



Tourists staying at hotels along Jalan TAR have to drag their luggage to and from pick-up points when the Sunday road closure is in effect.

without the vehicular traffic.

"I sometimes bring my son with me when I come here, now I don't have to be too concerned about him running around.

"Regular visitors will know where to park, so I do not see it (road closure) as a problem," she said.

However, Nazirah suggested that more signs be put up to alert motorists about the road closure.

"It is only when motorists see the barricade at the Jalan Esfahan intersection that they remember the road is closed.

"They may be caught off guard, especially those who are new to

the area," she noted.

Sungai Buloh resident Mohd Nizam Abu Hasan, 36, also said the road closure was not a hassle, even with him bringing along three children under the age of five.

"People can sometimes get careless when they are busy shopping. But now we do not have to worry about cars when we are walking from one side to the other.

"It is also easier as we do not have to take up the pedestrian walkway when pushing the strollers; we can just walk on the road," he said.

Mohd Nizam said there was ample parking in the buildings surrounding Jalan TAR within easy walking distance to the shopping district.

But for Nur Hidayah Mohd Aziz, 45, the closure proved to be a hassle in her shopping experience.

"I don't usually shop here, but I wanted to buy several carpets and rugs. The carpets are heavy and my car is parked too far away to be carried.

"Luckily, the shop assistants said they were able to keep them until I pick them up on a weekday," she said.