



KUALA LUMPUR City News

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K U A L A L U M P U R C I T Y H A L L

DOUBLE DECKER BURIALS IN CITY?

Kuala Lumpur City Hall will introduce double decked burials in Muslim Cemeteries if the idea is accepted by the religious authorities and public in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, says the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur, Brig. Gen. Datuk Mohmad Shaid Bin Mohd Taufek.

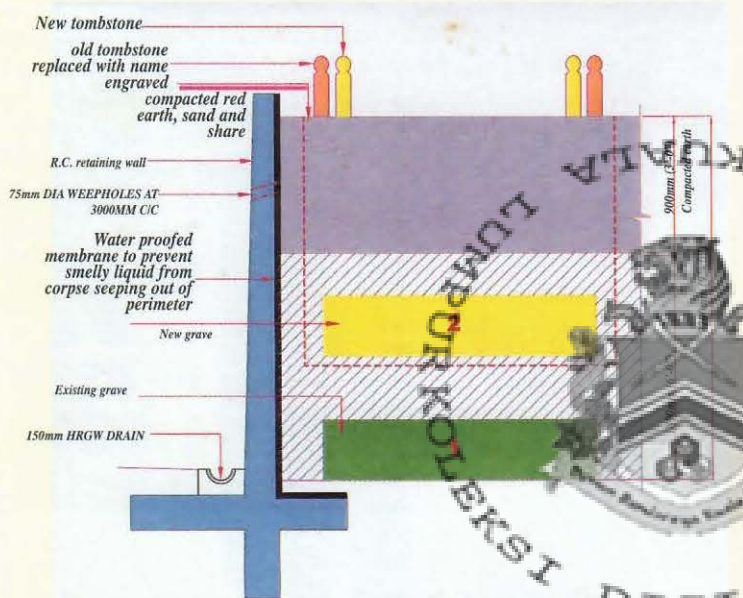


Diagram showing retaining wall and water proof membrane structure to contain compacted earth.

"The need to introduce this innovative burial method is deemed urgent due to the increasing demand for burial grounds in the city. The situation has reached a critical stage and alternative ways of burial must be introduced now, before the problem becomes worse," he added.

According to the Kuala Lumpur Draft Structure Plan 2020, there is 69.6 hectare of muslim burial ground. Statistics reveal that there are 541,082 bumiputras in the city out of a total population of 1,423,900 people.

The average population growth rate is expected to be between 1% to 3% within the next ten years. Logical there should be a corresponding increase in burial ground. But this is not possible in a growing city where land is required for other uses and development.

The conventional method of increasing burial grounds cannot be implemented. There are six strategic areas for Muslim Cemeteries namely, City Center, Wangsa Maju-Maluri, Sentul-Manjalara, Damansara-Penchala, Bukit Jalil-Seputeh and Bandar Tun Razak-Sungai Besi.

Time is of essence. Early proactive steps have to be initiated now to overcome the problem. In this regard, the double-tiered burial concept proposal is one of the better solutions, said the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur, Brig. Gen. Datuk Mohmad Shaid.

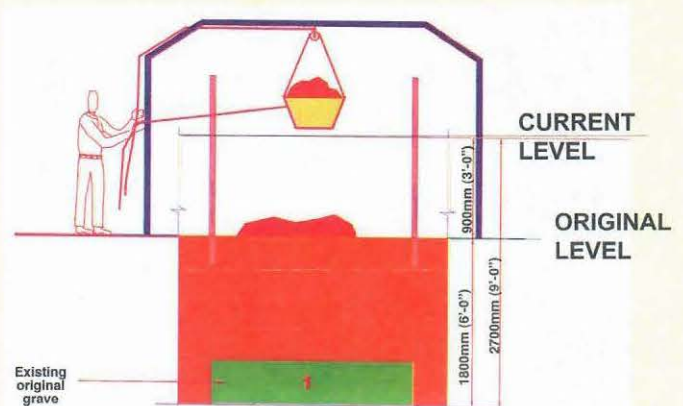
The method has been in use at the Masjid Al-Jamiul Badawi Mosque Muslim Cemetery in Kepala Batas, Seberang Perai, Pulau Pinang where Prime Minister YAB Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi hails from. The mosque was built by the Prime Minister's grandfather.

It is understand that this method of burial which is also implemented in Egypt, can only be done in cemeteries which are plain with only a tombstone, that can be removed and replaced after the second burial has taken place.

The 'bucket and pulley' system will be utilized to top up the existing graveyard with red earth, sand and shale so that water can seep through easily. The earth to be compacted on the original graveyard (which should be fully utilized) will be about one metre high. Water proofed concrete walls will surround the graveyard to prevent seepage from corpses into the surrounding areas beyond the graveyard perimeter. However, weep holes will be provided above, for drainage of rain water.

If the concept is implemented it would be a common sight and a norm in future to see two tombstones in one grave measuring 3' x 6'. Once implemented, graveyard/burial ground acreage is expected to double and alleviate the growing demand for burial sites, at least for the near future.

Brig. Gen. Datuk Mohmad Shaid said that road shows and briefing sessions will be conducted to explain and elucidate on this new proposal to the Muslim Community and related parties. Earlier, a team of senior officials led by the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur visited the Kepala Batas Cemetery on 9 January 2004.



Earth will be compacted utilising a 'bucket and pulley' system up to 3' - 0" above the original grave.



From the Mayor's Desk

A Common Responsibility

The recent fire in the Taman Wahyu I, Public Housing Project (PPR) in Jinjang where an Indian family of three perished brings to mind the many other tragic deaths that have occurred in houses which were heavily 'barricaded' with iron/steel grills in the past.

It also brings to our attention what the irresponsible behaviour of some sectors of our population can do by their inconsiderate acts of vandalism. Thirdly, it also reminds us of our role in society to educate our children and citizens to be more civic minded, in taking care of public property as a community oriented service. This will prevent public amenities and utilities from being vandalized and rendered useless.

Two major causes have been identified for the unwarranted death of the family. In most of the cases where fires occurred padlocked grill doors were found to be the main cause. When a fire occurs, particularly in the wee hours of the morning, occupants are caught unaware. Much precious time is wasted looking for the keys to the door.

What more with heat from the fire and smoke filled room, the desperate occupants would have died due to 'inhalation of carbon monoxide' smoke and subsequently burnt to death. In the Taman Wahyu I incident burning candles were suspected to be the cause of the fire.

If each and everyone cooperated in the spirit of good neighbourliness and community spirit, vandalism could be arrested and eradicated. Fearing this, City Hall officials had removed the hoses and nozzles and kept them in a store nearby. The hoses could be used anytime in case of a fire. The hoses too cannot be used without a nozzle. Most often only the firemen can handle the powerful down comer hose.

Another problem is the habit of squatters who carry lorry loads of their belongings and old baggage from their previous squatter homes to their new PPR flats, thus making their homes congested and restricting movement. Many problems arise while trying to escape when a fire occurs more so in a flat that only has one exit. Yet some squatters find it difficult to leave behind their squatter culture and mentality. Old habits do not die overnight.

They take time to adapt to the new clean environment and various restrictions imposed for the common good. There is a persistent and incorrigible tendency to destroy the lifts, fittings and fixtures for no apparent reason. Some derive a sort of perverted pleasure indulging in such destructive and malicious activities.

While orientation and educational programmes are conducted to help them settle down in the new environment, matters have not improved that much. In fact, million of dollars are spent on replacing and repairing vandalized, missing or destroyed public property.

It is hoped public housing and flat occupants learn from the many tragedies that have occurred to date and cooperate with the Authorities to ensure a safe and secure environment for them and their families.

THREE DIE IN FLAT FIRE

An early morning fire in one of the 3rd Floor flats at the newly built Public Housing Project (PPR) in Taman Wahyu I claimed the lives of three people of an Indian family on 28 June 2004.

R. Ramachandran, his wife R. Parameswary and son, Hariharan who had just moved in earlier in the day on 27 June 2004 were trapped behind grilled padlocked doors during the fire. Rescuers were prevented from helping the family due to the padlocked grill doors and windows, intense heat and smoke.

The blaze was further fuelled by the family's household furniture and boxes of belongings which were still unwrapped. The absence of a hose reel and the presence of a down comer also did not help the tragic situation. It is believed that a burning candle or some other combustible material/source caused the fire. However, investigations by the authorities are continuing to determine the cause of the fire

UNDERSTANDING FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT

The recent fire tragedy at one of the 3rd Floor Flats, Public Housing Projects (PPR) in Taman Wahyu I, Jinjang has raised many questions as to why the fire could not be doused in time to save the victims. Besides being 'grilled' behind padlocked doors, the absence of fire fighting equipment was attributed to one of the reasons.

The Public Housing Flats built under the New Economic Action Council (NEAC) or commonly known as MTEN only come with fire extinguishers and down comer hoses. No reel hoses are provided as standard fire fighting equipment.

Fire extinguishers and reel hoses (hard black rollable hoses mounted on reels) are normally the 'first aiders' used by residents to put out a fire. Fire extinguishers and reel hoses are mounted on the walls within easy reach of rescuers/fire fighters. These two equipment are good for putting out small fires. In the Taman Wahyu I incident, fire extinguishers were available but not the reel hoses.

The down comer fire hoses are big hoses, rolled up around a mounted spindle or reel and are used by firemen or trained personnel. The nozzle made of brass is big and water pressure can be controlled by manipulating the nozzle. The big fire hose which is about 100 feet long cannot be used if it is not stretched and laid out. It is also useless without a nozzle. Those not trained to use the down comer hose can hurt themselves by the flailing nozzle. Usually only firemen use the down comer hose to put out big blazes, as

was the case at the Taman Wahyu I fire. It was a tragedy waiting to happen, what more with the action of the occupants itself who it is apparent were not conscious of fire safety.



Wet riser fire hose outlet without fire hose

POPULATION GROWTH IN THE CITY

The population in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur has been growing at an average annual growth rate of 2% between 1980-1981 and 1.39% between 1991-2000. The population in 1990 was 1,231,476 reaching 1,474,300 in 2002 (Census Report). The city is 100% urbanized and had the highest density per sq. km at 5340 in 2000. The Malaysian population density was 67 per sq.km in the same year. Sarawak had the lowest density at 16 people per sq.km.

In 2000, 3.5% Bumiputra, 5.4% Chinese and 2.4% Indian and 3.0% others were aged 65 years and above living in Malaysia.

In the same year, the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur comprised of 42.7% Malay, 43.5% Chinese, 11.4% Indian and 0.9% other Bumiputras. There were 749,400 males and 724,900 females in 2002 out of a population of 1,474,300 in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur with a sex ratio of 103. The total dependency ratio was 40.4% compared to the national average of 59.2%.

The Crude Birth Rate (CBR) declined from 25/1000 in 1994 to 23.2/1000 in 1998. The Crude Death Rate (CDR) in 1994 was 4.2 and remained the same in 1998. The number of live births in 1994 was 32,586 while in 1998 the figure recorded was 32,844. The number of deaths registered in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur in 1994 stood at 5,506 and 5,890 in 1998.

Looking at the statistics, the number of births and deaths in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur is bound to increase annually due to the growing population, morbidity and mortality rates.

On the other hand, the land acreage in Kuala Lumpur has not increased since 1974 (243.65 sq.km). Land area in Kuala Lumpur was 0.647 sq.km in 1895, 44.03 sq.km in 1912 and 93.24 sq.km in 1950. By 2020, the population in Kuala Lumpur is forecast to reach 4,103,991 people. The Local Authority will be hard put to find burial space for the faithful departed at that time. Solutions have to be found from now to put to rest the dead.

BURIALS AND CREMATION - A COSTLY AFFAIR

Funerals or sending off the faithful departed can be a costly affair – that too depending on the social status and affordability of families.

The price of a coffin can vary from RM300 to RM20,000. The various ceremonies and burial rites can also 'cost a bomb'. A simple Hindu burial/cremation ceremony can range from RM2,000 – RM3,000.

A Christian burial/cremation can vary from RM3,500 – RM5,000. Today, many funeral parlours and undertakers have sprung up to cater for this type of business – what more with an increasing number of people dying due to various reasons and causes.

A destitute dying in the government hospitals is given a burial by the Welfare Department for which the undertaker is paid RM100. At times charitable/welfare bodies/Associations take the responsibility to bury the dead.

BURIAL PERMITS AND REASONS FOR DEATH

An analysis of data obtained from the Death Certification Unit, Health Department Kuala Lumpur City Hall reveals some interesting facts on why people died. Senility, heart diseases, cancer and lung related diseases were found to be the major causes of death.

Most of the cancer, heart and lung diseases could be avoided if early treatment was sought. Some could have been prevented if the person had followed and practiced a healthy life style by exercising, quit smoking, observing a balanced and proper diet and leading a less stressful life. Whatever it is, "Prevention is better than cure." Otherwise we will be part of the morbidity and mortality statistics.

CAUSES OF DEATHS IDENTIFIED BY KUALA LUMPUR CITY HALL (BURIAL PERMITS)

Year	Senility	Cancer	Heart Disease	Lung Disease
2000	1238 (36%)	437 (13%)	1031 (30%)	269 (8%)
2001	NA	NA	NA	NA
2002	1592 (47%)	410 (12%)	899 (26%)	144 (4%)
2003	1720 (45%)	469 (12%)	745 (20%)	134 (4%)
2004 (April)	726 (60%)	164 (14%)	171 (14%)	27 (2%)

It is also sad to note that some 6,000 people also die on the roads every year while some are maimed seriously and resigned to a life of the bed-ridden till death. Many of these fatalities could be avoided – but then most just want to die on the roads, particularly the young ones, who not only kill themselves but take along innocent ones along the way.



The price of caskets can vary based on the type of wood, fittings and decor used to make the coffin. Elaborate burial ceremonies are also conducted by some to "send off" the dear ones. Photo KL City News

The rich and famous who want a VIP or first class burial can find a final resting place in one of the memorial parks which may range from RM10,000 to RM100,000 or more depending on the site and elaborate décor requested for. Some also make provisions in their will, as to what type of burial they would on their demise and allocate a sum of money for this purpose.