



Palm Court condominium faces a busy Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad. — Photos: CHAN TAK KONG/The Star

Vexed by vendors turning KL walkways into mazes

Residents say traders blocking footpaths and endangering public

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THE denizens of Brickfields and Taman United are urging Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) to ban traders from operating on all public walkways, not just those with tactile blocks which are used to guide the visually impaired.

They pointed out that DBKL's regulations and guidelines prohibit street vendors from operating on sidewalks, especially when their presence creates obstructions or causes endangerment.

And yet, dozens of traders are still spotted occupying such spaces in parts of the city, they say.

"DBKL appears to be going against their own standard operating procedure on street vendors and putting the public at risk...not just the visually impaired community, but children too," said SMK Vivekananda Parent-Teacher Association

(PIBG) member Edwin Kumar, who lives in Brickfields.

"I am constantly worried about my children crossing Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad, which is not only congested but dangerous too because several roadside traders operate along the pedestrian path."

Edwin said schoolchildren frequently dashed across the busy road to buy sweets from the vendors, resulting in numerous near-miss incidents, as the view of both pedestrians and motorists is obstructed.

"Who will be responsible if something untoward happens?" he asked.

Residents are calling for a ban following a recent walkabout by DBKL Building Control Department director Ismawijaya Zah Mohamed Jais to inspect damaged tactile tiles and look into obstacles along pedestrian walkways in Brickfields.

This inspection was prompted

by a *StarMetro* report on June 10, titled "Path to accessibility," which highlighted the difficulties faced by the visually impaired in navigating streets in the area.

During the walkabout, DBKL issued summonses to several business operators in Brickfields for obstructing tactile paths and pedestrian walkways.

Business operators scrambled to remove obstacles when they saw DBKL officers approaching the area.

A coffeeshop operator along Jalan Thambipillay was seen hastily removing chairs and tables, while a stallowner was instructed to remove a cooking station placed on a walkway.

Palm Court Condominium resident Malar Raju is among those voicing concerns about stallowners taking up space on walkways.

"The vendors clutter the walkway with their wares and items such as sugar cane husks and coconuts.



Vendors cluttering the walkway with their wares in Brickfields.



DBKL enforcement officers issuing a notice to a stallowner operating with a restaurant licence on a walkway. The owner has since vacated the site on his own accord.

pointed out that Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad had a 30km per hour (km/h) speed limit.

He said this meant that it was a high-traffic area with no room for traders to operate, let alone motorists to stop along the road to buy food or goods.

Lecturer John Manikam expressed similar sentiments, highlighting that roadside traders operating along the walkway in front of Palm Court condominium were endangering pedestrians.

"Motorists stop at the traffic-light junction to buy food and

drinks, contributing to the congestion and endangering schoolchildren," he stressed.

"Why does DBKL allow traders to set up stalls at a traffic-light junction?"

"What is the point of installing a signalised traffic light and CCTV (closed-circuit TV) cameras if hawkers are allowed to trade here?" he questioned.

Residents also pointed out that the two pedestrian bridges built across the road had become white elephants.

"The bridges are being utilised by vagrants and drug addicts as a



Some of the stalls on Jalan Sepadu in Taman United are taking up almost the entire width of the walkway.

place to sleep and hang out," said Edwin.

"It is neither safe for children to use these bridges nor cross the roads on street level.

"It is time for DBKL to demonstrate accountability and revamp their street vendor guidelines," he said.

Likewise, Taman United residents in Jalan Kelang Lama feel that their township is always congested.

DBKL has allowed roadside hawkers to operate on pedestrian paths in the area, especially on Jalan Sepadu.

Resident Sean Oon said, "These stalls are endangering the people who patronise them, given their close proximity to the road."

He added that the site was not suitable for stalls and that everything should be removed.

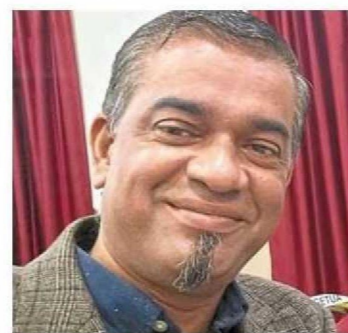
In a written statement issued through its media unit, DBKL said trading activities were generally not allowed on walkways as they created public obstructions.

"However, hawker licences can be approved subject to the suitability of the location, ensuring there is no obstruction.

"The approval of a location is decided through a committee that includes representatives from various departments," DBKL said.

But the local authority failed to address why licences were issued to traders to operate on walkways with tactile blocks.

Dozens are also operating with a restaurant licence and some of them have built permanent structures on walkways, complete with zinc roof and tiled flooring, without obtaining a development order from the relevant DBKL departments.



Edwin says schoolchildren dash across the busy road to buy sweets from the vendors.

"Some even fry snacks on the pedestrian path that has tactile blocks, endangering the public," she said.

A Palm Court joint management body (JMB) member, who wished to remain anonymous, said the JMB had received numerous complaints from residents about the vendors operating outside the condominium.

"Residents pay maintenance fees for the upkeep of the property grounds and assessment tax to DBKL for the area outside the residential premises.

"No one likes coming out of their homes to find messy walkways with oil and grime on the ground, sugar cane and coconut husks left on the road, and standstill traffic as motorists tend to stop by the roadside to buy drinks and snacks at the stalls," she said.

Similarly, a grandmother who wanted to be identified only as Devi, said she felt it was dangerous crossing the road with her granddaughters.

"There are near-misses at least three to four times a week," she added.

Another resident James Raj