



Laman Rimbunan residents say stagnant water at the playground after a downpour could turn into potential breeding ground for mosquitoes. — Photos: ART CHEN/The Star

KL playgrounds not safe for child's play

Rundown recreational sites left idle as residents stay away from these hazardous spaces

By FARID WAHAB
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SEVERAL children's playgrounds in Segambut and Kepong in Kuala Lumpur are so badly maintained that they have fallen into disrepair.

Faulty equipment, poor landscaping and water ponding are among issues identified by *StarMetro* during a visit to five locations.

In certain areas, there are piles of rubbish emanating a strong stench and attracting pests.

Residents say these problems are discouraging people from taking up outdoor activities and keeping children away.

They are urging Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) to step up maintenance and enforcement against litterbugs and rule-breakers.

Ageing facilities

At Suria Homes in Segambut, Kuala Lumpur, the playground equipment such as swings and see-saws at a 10-year-old playground are visibly rusty.

Frequent rain has also caused the walkway around the area to be covered with algae, making it slippery and unsafe for residents.

The residential area has some 140 double-storey terrace homes. Residents association chairman Gary Low said several complaints had been lodged with City Hall over the years.

"DBKL regularly sends workers to carry out general cleanup such as blowing away fallen leaves but they don't do much more.

"We used to have many resi-



Low says loose and dislodged rubber pavers at the Suria Homes playground pose a safety risk.

dents coming here for leisure and exercise but these days almost no one uses the playground anymore," he said.

The association's committee member Gan Kim Peng said some rubber pavers at the playground were damaged.

"They pose safety risks as children might trip and fall," he said.

Residents are also concerned about a strip of idle land just outside the playground's fence.

It is overgrown and has piles of rubbish and residents are worried that it could be a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

It is unknown who the landowner is.

Gan said he was among a handful of residents who had contracted dengue.

"The situation gets worse after downpours as water will stagnate

at the playground, sometimes for days," said Gan.

He also said many old trees had not been pruned, raising fears that their branches might fall onto residents.

At the Laman Rimbunan Mawar housing estate in Kepong, residents are upset over the old equipment and poor lighting at the neighbourhood playground.

The area has 590 terrace homes, built in early 2000s, and houses some 3,000 residents.

Residents association secretary Steven Lim said the floor and nets of the basketball court were in poor condition.

He also said the lighting at the playground only turned on after 9.30pm.

"We recently had an external repairman come to fix the lamps at the playground," he said.

Playground-related injuries

3,000 accidents occur every three months

Children aged **five to nine** are most affected

75% of cases are caused by falling from swings, monkey bars, slides and see-saws

64% of playgrounds have worn out flooring

Between 2014 and 2016, **530** children sustained injury at playgrounds

Half of the equipment and furniture are rusty

A 2018 survey on **40** playgrounds found three quarters of them are in 'deplorable condition'

Sources: www.myhealth.gov.my, Malaysia Playground Safety Association

TheStargraphics



Lip Eng (left) and his assistant Dic Lai showing a broken and unusable bench at Taman Usahawan Kepong Park. — Filepic



Cracked steps at the playground of Laman Rimbunan Mawar.

Apart from water ponding at various spots, overgrown weeds can be seen jutting out of several cracked walkways.

On June 19, *StarMetro* reported about a number of trees at the playground being infested with fire ants.

The association's administrative officer Tan Siao Hue said insecticide was placed at affected trees.

Steven said that DBKL workers recently pruned these trees following residents' complaints.

Behind the Sri Segambut community hall in Taman Sri Segambut are several broken slides.

Several swings are also broken and the soft flooring beneath the play set is patchy, posing safety risks, besides being an eyesore.

"Children playing there might get injured," said a resident who

wanted to be known only as Ng. Similar conditions are observed at the Jinjang Utara field, located near the Jinjang Utara market.

Unlike the other recreational facilities, this field is not located at a housing estate.

It is often frequented by teenagers for sporting activities as well as senior citizens who come to socialise.

Here, two swings are broken while the rest are rusty and appear to be unsafe for use.

At the field and near the playground, untrimmed grass above ankle level makes the area look unkempt.

Resident Adrian Lee, who regularly takes his children to the area, expressed worry that snakes could be lurking in the grass.

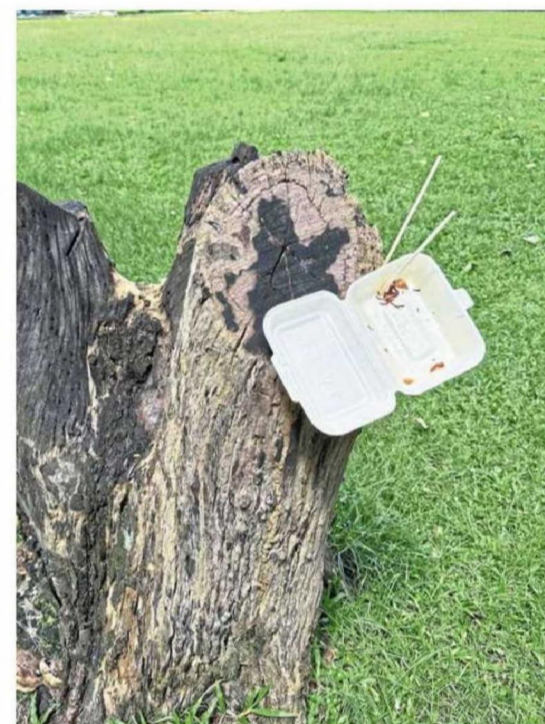
Over in Taman Usahawan Kepong, Kepong MP Lim Lip Eng



The flooring tiles at Taman Sri Segambut playground are damaged. — FARID WAHAB/The Star



Untrimmed grass near the Suria Homes playground.



Used food packaging left on a tree stump at Padang Jinjang Utara in Kepong.

has been calling for maintenance of the park which has fallen into disrepair.

In a *StarMetro* report on July 3, he said he requested for a RM1mil allocation from DBKL for repairs and new equipment.

Apart from two aged sepak takraw courts, the park has broken benches and messy pavements.

Lackadaisical attitude

Poor upkeep aside, indiscriminate dumping and vandalism are other problems at these playgrounds.

At Laman Rimbunan Mawar, Steven said some dog owners did not pick up their pets' droppings at the playground.

"This poor behaviour is creating an unhygienic environment and posing health risks to other residents," he said.

At the Jinjang Utara field, there are lots of food wrappings and other domestic rubbish.

Old and broken office chairs were left at one of the gazebos.

Resident CW Koh said motorcyclists could be seen riding on the walkway, damaging it, and also endangering people.

The motorcyclists, he said, did

not pay heed to a DBKL signage prohibiting people from riding their vehicles at the field.

It states that those found guilty are liable to be charged under Parks (Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur) By-Laws 1991, which provides for a RM2,000 fine or imprisonment of not more than one year, or both.

"DBKL should instal bollards to deter offenders," said Koh, stressing that City Hall must not compromise on enforcement.

Worrying statistics

These standards, which cover the design and safety features, were developed by the Standards Department and Sirim Bhd.

Additionally, a 2018 survey of 40 playgrounds by Malaysia Playground Safety Association classified 75% of them as being in "deplorable" condition.

It also found that half of the equipment were rusty while 64% of playgrounds had worn-out flooring.

Balance beams topped the list for damaged equipment (63%) followed by track rides (58%) and swings (47%).

It also estimated that 530 children sustained injury at playgrounds between 2014 and 2016.

DBKL had yet to respond to requests for comments at press time.

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Malaysia study titled "Applicability of Malaysian Standards in Benefiting Health and Safety of Children in Malaysia" stated that most playgrounds fail to comply with the required standards - MS2665 (Playground surfacing - Part 1: Standard guide) and MS966 (Playground equipment - Safety performance for public use).

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