

Mess in the city

The sheer amount of rubbish dumped by the homeless and other offenders has laid to waste the extensive makeover of Kuala Lumpur's Historic Triangle, a major tourist attraction. >2&3



Unsightly: Rubbish marring artist Stephanie Kuen's sculpture (above) in Kuala Lumpur's Historic Triangle as well as dumped along a walkway, across from a sign announcing the area's significance. — Photos: MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI/The Star



Entrance to Lorong Bandar 13 riddled with rubbish and clothes left to dry on railings. — Photos: MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI/The Star

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TOUR guides specialising in Kuala Lumpur's heritage sites have opted to exclude certain old-world charms from their itinerary, as the once beautified areas have turned into rubbish dumping grounds.

Free Walk Kuala Lumpur Unscripted founder Jane Rai, who conducts heritage tours on foot, was embarrassed to explain to tourists why there were overflowing rubbish bins right next to historical landmarks.

"It affects the quality of my tour and disrupts my storytelling.

"In fact, the entire experience just ruins the mood for everyone," said Jane.

She recounted a recent tour with South American visitors, where there were rubbish bins filled beyond capacity next to an information board depicting the life of Kapitan Cina Yap Ah Loy.

"The large bins were filled with rubbish that had been accumulating for several days in an alley on Jalan Yap Ah Loy.

"Additionally, rubbish was scattered on the ground around the bins, emitting an overwhelming stench.

"To make matters worse, pigeon droppings covered the information board," she said.

Jane pointed out that the lane underwent a makeover by Think City and Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) in 2018 as part of a project to brighten up and revitalise old and dingy lanes of the city.

"It was an integral part of my storytelling and quite popular too.

"A lot of money was spent to refurbish the area and make it vibrant, so I cannot understand why DBKL placed rubbish bins here," she said.

The information board describes the early history of Kuala Lumpur from the 1860s to the present day and was a favourite spot with tourists, generating numerous questions from her guests.

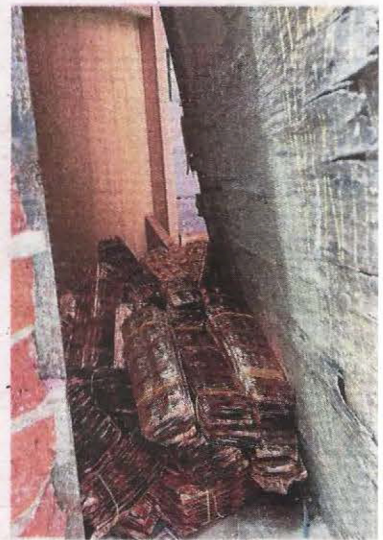
According to Jane, Lorong Yap Ah Loy is not the only place she

Strewn rubbish mar KL's historic sites

Tour groups steer clear of dirty, stinky areas



Ng showing photos of VVIPs at his fruit stall throughout the years.



Expired medicine found dumped on Lorong Yap Ah Loy.

and her fellow guides are avoiding.

They would also bypass the Historic Triangle, which is part of Heritage Trail 3 on Lebu Pudu.

This narrow street near Central Market that connects Jalan Hang Kasturi in the west to Jalan Tun Perak in the east, underwent a RM300,000 upgrading project in 2018, aimed at creating clean, safe and vibrant spots for pedestrians and tourists.

The DBKL and Think City collaboration involved laneways at Lorong Bandar 13, Lorong Lebu Ampang, Lorong Hang Lekiu, Lorong Tun HS Lee South, Lorong Yap Ah Loy, Lorong Pudu, Lorong Tun Tan Cheng Lock and Lorong Hang Kasturi South.

"This entire hub has now become a rubbish dumping

ground," lamented Johan K, another tourist guide.

"Where there are rubbish bins, they are full to the brim, and where there are no bins, plant boxes, decorative art installations, and shop corridors are filled with rubbish.

"Instead of calling it Historic Triangle, they should name it the rubbish triangle or homeless triangle," he said, referring to the burgeoning homeless population in the area.

"At Lorong Bandar 13, the once-vibrant 100m lane has become a 'toilet' for the homeless community so it is another spot to bypass," he added.

Disappointed and disheartened by the conditions, Jane told Think City about her decision to avoid these areas until the areas were cleaned up.

Ng Boon Siew, a fruit trader with 40 years of family history in the area, observed a decline in cleanliness since the Covid-19 pandemic hit and how it had been affecting businesses.

"Today, the number of people who stop by my stall has dropped significantly," he said, attributing the decline to office closures and relocations because of a growing homeless population.

"In the past, VVIPs would visit my father's stall to buy fresh fruits," Ng said, showing old photographs of dignitaries on display at his stall on Lorong Bandar 11.

When *StarMetro* visited the Historic Triangle, situated in the heart of Lebu Pudu, a woeful scene unfolded – rubbish was scattered throughout.

An abandoned DBKL-owned building in the centre of the



Jane is baffled by DBKL's decision to place rubbish bins right next to a tourist attraction at Lorong Yap Ah Loy.



Many businesses in the area have closed and become rubbish dumping grounds because of the growing homeless population.



Ummi (second from right) talking to homeless folk in Lebu Pudu.
— Courtesy of SWCorp

Historic Triangle has been turned into a rubbish dump, while the red steel sculpture by artist Stephanie Kuen was surrounded by discarded items.

In Lorong Bandar 11, undesirable graffiti covered walls and the place was strewn with rubbish. The mess extended to a mini rubbish house meant for rubbish disposal.

Someone had also disposed a cat carcass at the site.

Lorong Bandar 13 painted a similarly grim picture – the area appeared neglected and had been transformed into a makeshift public toilet that doubled as a laundry spot for the homeless.

T-shirts, pants, shorts and underwear were left to dry haphazardly strewn along railings and amid plant bushes.



A mini rubbish house at Lorong Bandar 11 with rubbish scattered all around it.

Lorong Yap Ah Loy presented its own set of challenges – a car occupied a no-parking zone and two rubbish bins stood out like a sore thumb next to a colourful info board on Kapitan Yap Ah Loy.

Illegally dumped rubbish lined the side of the lane and hundreds of expired strips of medicine were found at the site.

"The deplorable conditions witnessed during our tours serve as a distressing snapshot of the state of these heritage locations," Jane lamented.

"The urgent need for restoration and maintenance is evident, as these sites, once vibrant and culturally significant, now suffer from neglect and misuse," she emphasised.

Meanwhile, when contacted, Think City's urban mechanics, placemaking lead director Daniel Lim said he was aware of the situation.

"We have received complaints from the public and we have filed these complaints with DBKL via the E-aduan channel.

"In fact, there are a lot of com-

plaints from us there.

"We understand the challenges, but everyone must play a part collectively to rectify what is taking place at the site," he said.

Last year, when a similar complaint was made to DBKL, then DBKL Project Implementation and Building Department director Norzaini Noordin acknowledged that City Hall was responsible for maintaining these areas along with the community.

Norzaini reiterated that the alleys were selected for their potential in becoming creative spaces and that DBKL needed the community to take ownership of the area.

Separately, SWCorp Federal Territories director Umami Kalthum Shuib paid a visit to the area after being notified of the issues and had promised to look into finding a solution.

"We need to identify a proper location in the area for people to dispose of their rubbish and it has to be a central spot, but not near tourist attractions," she said, adding that she would put a rush on it.