



A restaurant operator encroaching onto a walking path by placing tables and chairs near a tactile path. — Photos: LOW BOON TAT/The Star

(Left) A stall in Brickfields jutting onto the pedestrian path that has tactile guides for the visually impaired.

Brickfields tactile paths still blocked

Despite crackdown, various obstructions hindering people with visual impairment

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A RECENT check in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur, reveals that the needs of the visually impaired are still being ignored despite a nationwide crackdown on traders operating on pedestrian walkways and near staircases.

Even tactile blocks, essential for people with visual impairment to navigate busy streets, remain obstructed by traders.

Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) chief executive officer Datuk George Thomas said there were 180 people with visual impairment living in Brickfields and an additional 300 working there.

"Their lives are constantly at risk, not only because of some buildings' non-compliance with the MS1184 guidelines but also various obstacles throughout the area," he said.

MS1184 refers to the

Malaysian standard for universal design and accessibility code of practice for built environment, which ensures that public premises include design elements such as ramps, tactile indicators and accessible restrooms for people with disabilities.

"At the very least, the authorities should keep vendors off walkways with tactile blocks.

"Tactile blocks are vital for the blind community to navigate in the area," said Thomas.

Marlon Liew, who is visually impaired, recounted struggling to find his way around Brickfields during a downpour.

"It was raining heavily one morning, and I struggled to move safely in Brickfields because there were pools of water and many obstructions," said Liew.

"If it wasn't the motorcycles in my way, it was tables and chairs set up by restaurant and stall operators," he said.

Brickfields Rukun Tetangga

chairman SKK Naidu said he was dismayed over traders' indifference to the needs of people with visual impairment.

"Traders are causing an inconvenience to the blind community.

"It is a blatant disregard for the dignity and safety of those relying on these pathways to navigate their way," he said.

During a visit on Tuesday, *StarMetro* noticed an increase in the number of obstructions such as tables and chairs on walkways, compared to a visit there in June.

One roadside stall had even placed tables on the tactile path.

On Aug 1, Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming, during a Parliament sitting, talked about a nationwide crackdown by local authorities to address the issue of obstructions on walkways.

Nga said that as of June 30, a total of 879 public complaints

were received and 1,047 enforcement operations were carried out against traders unlawfully occupying five-foot ways and other public areas.

These efforts resulted in the issuance of 1,720 notices, 7,891 compounds and 339 seizures nationwide.

He said local authorities were stepping up enforcement to curb the misuse of public facilities as well as increasing periodic patrols and monitoring.

Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL), in a statement, stated that traders operating on pedestrian walkways would be relocated to hawker centres or suitable areas.

DBKL also said such traders held valid licences either under the Kuala Lumpur Madani licensing programme or static roadside stall licences.

Local authority by-laws on licensing stipulates that hawkers are not allowed to trade on

public walkways without permission.

Those doing so can be fined up to RM1,000 under Section 46 (1) (d) of the Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974.

Under the Act, the local authority is empowered to arrest without a warrant any person for placing an obstruction, such as goods or items, in any public place.

If convicted, the individual can be fined RM500 and up to RM1,000 for repeat offences.

In a series of reports in June, *StarMetro* highlighted Kuala Lumpur residents' call for a ban on roadside traders operating on pedestrian walkways, particularly those with tactile blocks.

