

FLASH floods are not new to Kuala Lumpur.

Yet, the recurrence of this phenomenon, despite numerous warnings and precedents, raises critical questions about the city's development strategy and governance.

As Kuala Lumpur MPs have pointed out, there is a desperate need for workable measures, not just words.

The nation's capital has seen rapid urbanisation over the years. The skyline is dotted with skyscrapers, residential towers, and shopping malls.

However, this development has come at a cost, compromising the city's natural drainage systems. Creeks, rivers, and open spaces that once absorbed excess water have given way to concrete.

Roadside drains are no longer functioning as they are covered by construction debris from projects nearby.

The recent flash floods that took the city by storm within just two hours of rainfall is a glaring testament to the poor drainage system.

It serves as a reminder that Kuala Lumpur's urban planning needs a serious overhaul.

It is impractical to argue against urban development; it's an essential part of economic growth. However, we must strive for sustainable development.

The government needs to adopt a multi-pronged strategy that balances urbanisation with environmental considerations. It requires:

- **Master planning with hydrology in mind.** Urban planning should be conducted with a comprehensive understanding of the local hydrology. Planners should be aware of how water flows naturally in the area and design the development in a way that either mimics or complements this natural flow.

- **Upgrading drainage systems.** Investing in robust and efficient drainage systems is mandatory. The city needs

Sustainable planning a must to fix KL's flood woes

Adopt multi-pronged strategies to balance development with environmental needs



The recent flash floods in the KL city within just two hours of rainfall is a glaring result of the poor drainage system. — Filepic

drains that can handle intense rainfall and divert floodwaters effectively.

- **Building retention ponds.**

Strategically located retention ponds can hold excess water during heavy rain and release it slowly, preventing flash floods. These can also serve as recreational parks during dry seasons.

- **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA).** EIAs need to be stringent and transparent, assessing not just the immediate but also the long-term impact of any new project. The public should have access to these assessments and their concerns must be addressed before approval is given to

any project.

Good governance is key to implementing these strategies. A task force comprising urban planners, hydrologists, environmentalists and other experts should be established to oversee all development projects in the city.

Moreover, accountability should be instilled at all levels of government. Failure to adhere to urban planning and environmental guidelines should result in immediate repercussions, both legal and political.

The public should be actively involved in all urban planning decisions that



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affect them. Townhall meetings and public consultations can offer valuable local knowledge and increase the legitimacy of planning decisions.

With the Meteorological Department forecasting bad weather until mid-March and with climate change intensifying, the need for action is immediate.

Temporary and short-term fixes will no longer suffice.

It's high time Kuala Lumpur adopted a sustainable approach to urban planning to mitigate the recurring nightmare of flash floods.

Development is necessary, but it should not drown the city's future.

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