

DBKL to repair abandoned lifts at Brickfields overhead bridge

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THE unused lift shaft of a pedestrian bridge in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur, which has been kept locked for over a decade, will soon be repaired and upgraded.

A Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) spokesperson confirmed that a tender process would begin soon to appoint contractors to fix the lifts and instal additional closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras.

The bridge is located in front of an Indian vegetarian restaurant and a pawn shop, and across from the Shell building along Jalan Tun Sambanthan.

The upgrades will make it more disabled-friendly and enhance safety.

The project, approved by DBKL's project development committee, is expected to be completed within a year.

The spokesperson said the decision was based on a survey conducted during public engagement sessions on Sept 10, 2021, and Aug 15, 2023.

"A series of discussions were held with various associations and stakeholders, particularly the visually impaired who emphasised the need for upgrades to ensure their safety.

"We have to care for the less fortunate, and the committee made the final decision," added the spokesperson.

In response, Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) chief executive officer Datuk George Thomas confirmed that the association and its members had requested the retention of the bridge and repair of its lifts.

"This bridge is situated on a major street with heavy traffic, surrounded by many offices, and the road is quite wide.

"We felt that repairing the bridge would better serve the community rather than demolishing it," he said.



DBKL plans to repair the lift facility at the pedestrian bridge on Jalan Tun Sambanthan for public use. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star

MAB had, however, requested for a bridge with lifts in front of its office in Jalan Tebing, off Jalan Tun Sambanthan 4, to be demolished as it had become a white elephant from lack of use and due to safety concerns.

DBKL removed the lift shaft in 2021. The bridge itself was demolished the same year at a cost of RM300,000 following public complaints that it was unsafe and posed a threat to the blind community.

"That bridge wasn't serving any purpose since the road was very narrow. And it had become a hangout for vagrants and drug addicts, which posed a threat to our staff. But this one is different," he added.

Thomas said MAB preferred if DBKL focused on installing more signalised traffic lights for the visually impaired, rather than building bridges.

However, some stakeholders are not happy with the news of repairs to the Jalan Tun Sambanthan bridge.

"I attended the meetings (with DBKL), and a few of us were against the bridge being there in the first place, as the lift structure blocked the front of my shop," said United Tapah Resources Sdn Bhd director Yuvapandian Ramasamy who operates a pawn shop.

"When they built it, they didn't get the lift shaft certified by the Occupational Safety and Health Department (DOSH), which is why it has been locked for almost 10 years.

"The lift shaft faces the entrance to my shop, and the lift has never been opened to the public," he added.

Another stakeholder, N. Panchacharam owns the building adjacent to the pedestrian bridge and confirmed its disuse.

"The lift has been locked for so long that the authorities should just remove the lift shaft entirely," said Panchacharam.

"Even if they fix the lifts, it will be underutilised and become a hangout for vagrants," he said, adding that DBKL should properly plan their bridges as many had become white elephants.

In 2010, DBKL announced plans to build pedestrian bridges to benefit the community, including the visually impaired.

Five bridges were constructed (*see graphic*) along Jalan Tun Sambanthan and Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad at a cost of over RM10mil.

Three of the bridges, each costing over RM2mil, were equipped with six lifts designed for the disabled.

However, these bridges became white elephants, with stakeholders urging DBKL to remove them.

Apart from the bridge near MAB, a second – located at Wisma Harapan and connecting to SK (P) Methodist Brickfields on Jalan Tun Sambanthan 4 – was considered for demolition but was ultimately spared, though its lift shaft was removed. — By BAVANI M