

# Building a resilient Kuala Lumpur

CLIMATE change is impacting us more rapidly and more severely than expected. It has become apparent that due to extreme dry and wet spells in Malaysia, the risk of climate change-related disasters in Kuala Lumpur has increased significantly.

The Malaysian National Water Research Institute estimates that from the 1970s to 2007, the intensity of rainfall duration increased by approximately 30%, while sea levels rose between 2.7mm and 7mm per annum from 1993 to 2010. At the same time, the incidence of droughts has increased.

The frequency and magnitude of climate change-related hazards such as droughts, wildfires, flash floods, and landslides have left the city and its residents vulnerable to further shocks and stresses. Recent incidents, including falling trees and sinkholes, are likely exacerbated by waterlogging and inadequate infrastructure monitoring and maintenance.

To prevent unnecessary damage in the future and build a more resilient KL, we need a well-structured climate adaptation strategy.

First, we must assess KL's vulnerability to extreme weather events, including precipitation, waterlogging, geohazards, heat, drought, and flooding caused by both natural and human activities.

To reduce vulnerabilities it is crucial to engage in risk dialogues with all relevant stakeholders, including city government agencies, Indah Water Konsortium, the Mineral and Geoscience Department, and util-



**Waterlogged:** An afternoon of heavy rain is sometimes enough to cause a flash flood in Kuala Lumpur. This one occurred on Aug 22 in the vicinity of the World Trade Centre. — AZMAN GHANI/The Star

ity providers.

This collaboration will help formulate strategies for implementing a spatial adaptation plan and investment agenda for the city's infrastructure.

The strategy should not rest solely on the shoulders of Kuala Lumpur City Hall, it should be a collective plan, aimed at intensifying and accelerating efforts to combat heat stress, drought, and the impact of urban flooding.

The spatial adaptation plan must also be integrated in the

management, maintenance, and monitoring of the city's environment and its utilities. Regular and systematic monitoring of risks such as waterlogging and deteriorating land integrity can mitigate landslides and sinkholes.

This can be pursued through effective legislation, monitoring plans, and standards. It is important to recognise that given the rapid changes in our climate, the risk assessments and the climate adaptation strategy of

the city must be reviewed and updated regularly.

While climate adaptation planning can mitigate and reduce risks, it cannot entirely prevent damage caused by extreme weather events. Therefore, authorities must also prioritise preparedness for calamities and hazards. Special attention should be paid to emergency provisions and the rapid restoration of vital and vulnerable infrastructure.

To be climate-ready and build a resilient Kuala Lumpur, it is necessary to identify vulnerabilities, anticipate future challenges, and develop smart strategies and plans to mitigate climate-related risks. Everyone has a role to play – not just the local authority, but also utility providers, city government agencies, private companies, business associations, and the residents of KL.

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