

'Bukit Bintang road closure proposal requires traffic study'

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KUALA Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) can collaborate with the police to explore the feasibility of closing certain roads in Bukit Bintang to alleviate traffic congestion, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories) Dr Zaliha Mustafa says.

However, she cautioned that such measures were far from straightforward.

Highlighting the need to assess overall traffic flow in the area, Dr Zaliha explained that altering one route could lead to unintended ripple effects elsewhere.

"We tested a similar initiative at the Jalan Sultan Ismail and Jalan Bukit Bintang junction last year to optimise walkability at Jalan Sultan Ismail's 'Shibuya Crossing,' and it was chaotic.

"That junction is a high-pedestrian zone, and where the one-way stretch of road was temporarily converted into a two-way road.

"However, it caused significant congestion in other areas, such



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as Jalan Imbi.

"After a one-week trial, DBKL's traffic advisors concluded that it was unworkable, and Jalan Sultan Ismail was reverted to its original one-way system in July," she explained.

Kuala Lumpur's 'Shibuya Crossing' was modelled after the famous Shibuya Scramble Crossing in Tokyo, Japan.

Located in front of Shibuya station's Hachiko exit, the Tokyo version halts traffic in all directions to allow pedestrians to flood the entire intersection.



The experiment to optimise walkability at Jalan Sultan Ismail's Shibuya Crossing proved unworkable. — Filepic

It is renowned for the "scramble" that occurs when the lights turn red, enabling a massive wave of pedestrians to cross freely.

Kuala Lumpur's version was introduced in the Bukit Bintang area on June 19, 2021.

Implemented after a detailed DBKL study, it allowed pedestrians to cross in all directions during designated traffic light intervals.

Dr Zaliha said, "Since our trial at Jalan Sultan Ismail was unsuc-

cessful, we decided to test the concept again at KLCC.

"This time, we used real-time video and AI technology to simulate the effects of closing specific roads on the city's overall traffic flow. The results were immediate.

"If there is traffic chaos, even the AI can become overwhelmed (*kelam kabut*).

"We invited members of the Cabinet committee on traffic congestion (JKMJR), including Deputy Prime Minister Datuk

Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, the mayor and representatives from Transport Ministry, to observe the impact."

It was recently reported that Kuala Lumpur police chief Comm Datuk Rusdi Mohd Isa said they were considering closing a key section of Jalan Bukit Bintang to address the area's traffic congestion.

The proposed closure targets the congested stretch between Pavilion Kuala Lumpur and Jalan Pudu, with the aim of easing gridlock in the city's Golden Triangle.

Known for its bustling activity day and night, Bukit Bintang is popular with locals and foreigners, thanks to its varied food, entertainment and accommodation offerings.

Comm Rusdi added that discussions with stakeholders were ongoing to evaluate the feasibility of rerouting vehicles and creating a pedestrian-friendly zone.

He emphasised that effective public communication would be essential to the success of the proposal.