

DBKL urged to act against all who obstruct tactile paths in Brickfields >4



# Obstructive practices in Brickfields

## Repairs on tactile paths meaningless without proper enforcement, say stakeholders

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REPAIRING broken tactile paving blocks to help the visually impaired walk safely in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur, is a half measure, says stakeholders.

The ongoing work will amount to naught if nothing is done to stop people from blocking these paths.

While the repairs are welcomed, the blind community wants Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) to tackle the issue of illegal stalls and illegally parked motorcycles and cars blocking these walkways.

These obstructions are not just inconveniences – they are the very reason the tactile paths keep breaking in the first place, said Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) chief executive officer Datuk George Thomas.

“What is the point of fixing them if they are going to be damaged all over again next week?” he said.

DBKL began works to repair the tiles in February following repeated complaints from the sight-impaired community.

However, Thomas said sustainability – not just surface-level repairs – was key.

“The only way this is going to work is to clear the walkways,” he emphasised.

Brickfields, proclaimed as Malaysia’s “blind-friendly” township, has in recent times struggled with accessibility, which stakeholders claim is due to weak enforcement and unchecked urban clutter.

Tactile paths designed to guide the visually impaired often lead nowhere, or worse, into danger.

“Fixing the tiles is one thing, but if there is no follow-through, we are just going in circles,” said Sharifah Aminah, a visually-im-



Motorcycles parked on tactile paving in Brickfields blocked the path for visually-impaired pedestrians.



Thomas says the obstructions are inconvenient and the reason the tactile paths keep breaking.

paired resident.

“I have always prided myself on being able to navigate Brickfields with just my walking stick, guided by the tactile blocks.

“But the township has become a dangerous place for people like me.”

Sharifah complained that the tactile guides were frequently blocked, damaged or rendered unusable.

Her experience reflects the broader concerns of the blind community, who say that without firm and consistent enforcement, DBKL’s repairs will be short-lived.

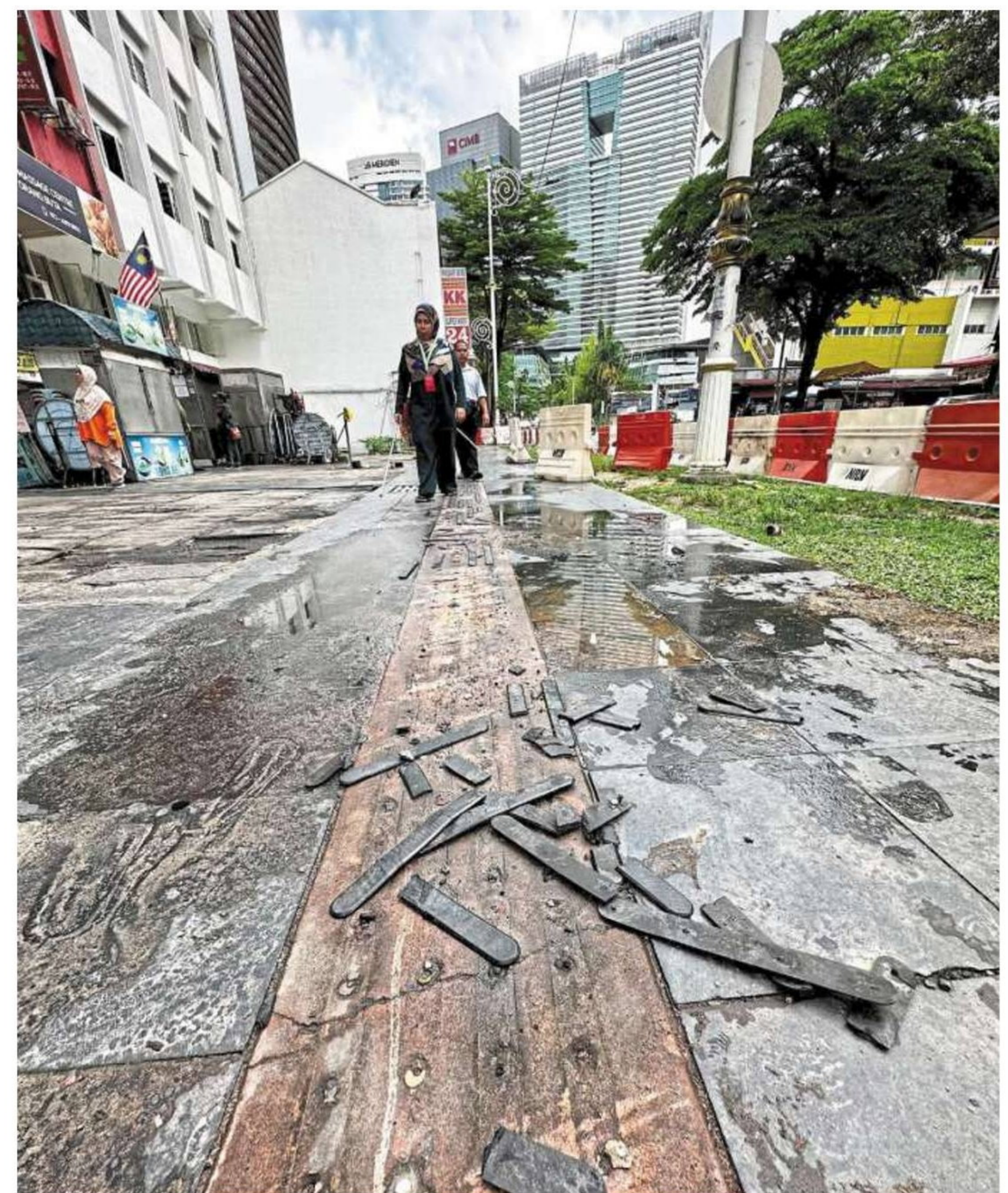
In response, DBKL has kickstarted efforts to make Brickfields safer under the CHASE City agenda, championed by Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Federal Territories) Datuk Seri Dr

Zaliha Mustafa.

CHASE City represents Dr Zaliha’s vision to transform all Federal Territories, including Kuala Lumpur, into Clean, Healthy, Advanced, Safe and Eco-Friendly cities.

Brickfields Rukun Tetanga chairman SKK Naidu, who participated in a work retreat with DBKL officers, said they were working towards transforming Brickfields into a safer, vibrant, inclusive and sustainable city.

“We have repeatedly urged DBKL to re-examine its licensing policies in areas like Brickfields,



Visually-impaired pedestrians waking along a damaged tactile path in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur. — Photos: LOW LAY PHON/The Star

where the situation is spiralling out of control with more stalls mushrooming every month.

“There have been many accidents and close calls involving the visually impaired bumping into parked cars, motorcycles, stalls and even trolleys on the walkways.

“The situation is deteriorating and must be urgently addressed,” said Naidu.

*StarMetro* had on March 12, reported that stakeholders demand urgent action to ensure

safe, accessible public spaces after a blind woman was injured after tripping over a trolley left on a pedestrian walkway.

Last August, Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming informed Parliament of a nationwide crackdown on obstructions along walkways.

However, in Kuala Lumpur, enforcement has done little to halt the proliferation of both illegal and licensed stalls encroaching on pedestrian walkways.