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Seeking an end to flood woes

Authorities considering proposals to address frequent flooding in Kepong, Kuala Lumpur. >2&3

High time for solutions

Kuala Lumpur authorities are working on phased plans to address frequent flooding affecting folk in Kepong, and improve drainage systems in the area. **>2&3**

Controlling the flow: Sungai Keroh that winds through Kepong, has burst its banks several times and caused floods in nearby neighbourhoods. — LOW LAY PHON/The Star

Among short-term measures to deal with the floods is building a flood retention wall alongside Sungai Keroh (between Taman Antoi and Taman Pusat Kepong). — Photos: LOW LAY PHON, YAP CHEE HONG and LEW GUAN XI/The Star

Seeking an end to Kepong's flood woes

Residents from Taman Antoi and Taman Pusat Kepong drained by frequent occurrences, want action from authorities

By LEW GUAN XI
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SINCE 2022, over 30 flooding incidents have plagued Kepong in Kuala Lumpur, with Taman Antoi and Taman Pusat Kepong among the worst hit.

Residents and business owners here have repeatedly faced the damaging effects of these floods, prompting urgent demands for effective solutions.

The affected residents say fear of flooding looms large in their minds with every heavy rainfall.

In August last year, floodwaters reached up to 1m high, causing extensive damage.

For Lee Chee Siew, 87, from Taman Antoi, cleaning up her house after the floods is especially troublesome as she lives alone.

"The floods damaged my furniture and appliances, including my refrigerator and bed. I had to rely on neighbours for help as I lack the strength to clean up myself.

"I also haven't bought any new furniture as I don't have the money. I am scared of another flood as I am living alone," said the octogenarian who lives in a single-storey house.

Many other residents in the neighbourhood also had to dispose of their damaged furniture following the floods.

One resident, who did not want to be named, said heavy rains kept her awake at night as she worried about the floods that might follow.

"On April 23, for instance, there was a downpour at around 4am and the drains outside my house were overflowing in just 30 minutes," she said.

"I dared not sleep as I needed to constantly monitor the water level so that I could react immediately if it started flooding."

Though her house was not affected by that downpour, some business operators in Taman Pusat Kepong, which is about 3km away from Taman Antoi, were not so fortunate.

Their premises were affected, with foot-high floodwaters damaging stocks and machinery.

Car workshop operator Liew Yen Mei, 35, said the flood damaged some of the machines in her premises.

"We face a high risk of flooding whenever there is a downpour. It is also a hassle for us to clean up our premises after floods. One of my workers even hurt his back in the process of cleaning," she said.

"We really want the authorities to come up with a solution. We can't be doing this all the time."

Meeting for solutions

To address these recurring issues, a technical meeting was held on March 13 between representatives of Gabungan Persatuan Penduduk Kepong Kuala Lumpur (GPPKKL), Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) and other agencies.

GPPKKL secretary Kelvin Ooi said the meeting was aimed at identifying the root causes of Kepong's flooding problems and devise a flood mitigation action plan – covering short, medium, and long-term strategies.

The meeting also included representatives from the Kuala Lumpur Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID), SWCorp Wilayah Persekutuan and Alam Flora.

Among the short-term measures agreed upon included deepening the Taman Pusat Kepong flood retention pond as well as building a new drainage system around it to improve water flow.

Ooi said a flood retention wall would also be constructed alongside Sungai Keroh (between Taman Antoi and Taman Pusat Kepong).

He added that the river was unable to deal with the volume of water during heavy rainfall and burst its banks.

Residents in Kepong, Kuala Lumpur fear a proposed development project near the flood retention pond in Jinjang would reduce the pond's capacity and lead to more flooding in their neighbourhoods.

Lee has been unable to replace the mattress that was damaged when her home in Taman Antoi was hit by floods last August.

Many residents in Taman Antoi in Kepong, Kuala Lumpur had to dispose of their damaged furniture following the flood in August last year. — Courtesy photo

Liew, tired of post-flood cleanups, wants authorities to come up with a solution to the flooding.

Ooi says several short, medium and long-term strategies were discussed at the meeting.

Loh urges authorities to conduct proper planning on management of the Sungai Keroh sluice gate.

Residents want answers on cause of Kepong flood

By HAZEL TAN YAN ENG
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RESIDENTS of Jalan Ambong in Kepong want answers after some flooding caused significant damage to their homes and businesses on Jalan Kuala Selangor.

Residents association secretary Ka-in Ho said a flood on Aug 23 was caused by Sungai Keroh sluice gate was closed.

This caused backflow into the drains, causing the rainwater to pool and overflow of water onto the road.

"Water began accumulating on the road at around 3pm. By 5.15pm, nearly half of Kepong was stranded."

Ho said residents were frustrated for flood victims's sake, affected by the flood.

"We want to know what happened and who is responsible for the sluice gate's closure at the site.

He proposed several solutions, including a comprehensive drainage review in Jalan Ambong and reviewing the operations of the sluice gate to prevent future incidents.

On Thursday, he inspected the Jalan Kuala Selangor embankment.

Further downpours, he also called for the Kepong Drainage and Irrigation project to be enhanced.

Collapsed drains and sewers in Taman Antoi, he said, needed to be repaired and upgraded.

He urged the Selangor Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) to consider a comprehensive study of the drainage system in Kepong.

"This is a long-term solution and residents will benefit.

Ho said he also wrote to Wanita Bersatu and Kepong Baru Bersatu chairperson Ooi Ah Ho, requesting an urgent meeting to come to the Bank's aid.

A resident, Wong Tian Poh, said she suffered losses at RM3,000.

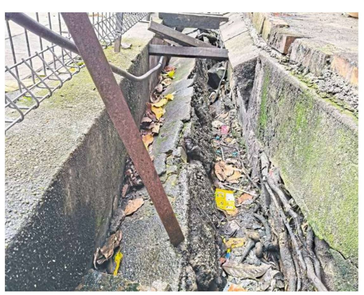
"The Fire Brigade was very quick and I appreciate their assistance," she said.

Another resident, Ooi Ah Ho, said she has lived in the area for 50 years and this was the worst flood she has experienced.

"We have to live with the flood, and it's very difficult," she said.

Residents want answers on cause of the Aug 23 flooding. — Photo: ASWIN TAN/The Star

Flashback to *StarMetro* report on Sept 3, 2024.



The wall of a drain behind a food court in Persiaran Mergastua in Kepong, Kuala Lumpur has collapsed, impeding the flow of water.

"DBKL has also agreed to ensure the flood alarm system functions properly. It will also alert the community leaders before the Sungai Keroh sluice gate is closed," he added.

In a *StarMetro* report on Sept 3, 2024, Ooi had said that the Sungai Keroh sluice gate was closed before the flash floods occurred last August.

He claimed that the closure was to prevent excessive rainwater from flowing into Kuala Lumpur city, which eventually resulted in the water flowing back into residential areas.

GPPKKL chairman Loh Kok Wai, who was also at the March meeting, also took issue with the closure of the sluice gates during periods of sustained rain.

He urged the authorities to carry out proper planning on the management of the sluice gate.

"When you are preventing Kuala Lumpur city from flooding, we in Kepong end up suffering from floods. The authorities should not just focus on the interests of city folk to the detriment of others," he said.

Taman Antoi Residents' Association president Low Chin Lai echoed the sentiment.

"We are not against preventing floods in Kuala Lumpur city, but our interests must also be considered," he said.

Ooi suggested relocating the sluice gates closer to the entrance of the Taman Pusat Kepong flood retention pond.

"This way, when it is closed, water can be channelled directly into the retention pond instead of flowing into the residential areas," he said.

This proposal, accepted by DBKL, is part of medium-term strategies which will also consider raising the bridge at Jalan Kepong Baru and deepening the Jinjang flood retention pond.

Ooi said excessive water should be channelled to the Jinjang flood retention pond, but pointed out that presently the drainage system lacked the capacity to handle the volume of water.

To resolve this, he proposed that DBKL build another drain in Taman Pusat Kepong to help channel excessive water back to Sungai Keroh when the Taman Pusat Kepong flood retention pond was full.

"DBKL conducted a site visit to look into this matter last week," he said when met on April 27.

In the long term, it was proposed for the construction of a second Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel (SMART) to manage the flow of rainwater in northern Kuala Lumpur, particularly from Sungai Keroh and Sungai Gombak.

Ongoing challenges

Despite these plans, unresolved issues remain, particularly concerning inadequate drain maintenance and capacity.

Ooi noted, "The meeting did not address drain upgrades, focusing instead on the Sungai Keroh's capacity to handle rainwater. However, DBKL will address drain issues case-by-case."

GPPKKL had, in a letter to the authorities in December last year, pointed out that the drains in the commercial areas around Jalan Ambong, Persiaran Mergastua and Taman Pusat Kepong were constantly clogged due to their small size and rubbish being dumped in them.

A site visit by *StarMetro* in March revealed many drains clogged with grease and debris, with one drain wall collapsed.

Ooi, who is also the secretary of Taman Antoi Residents' Association, urged DBKL to enhance drain capacity, especially in flood-prone Taman Antoi.

He also called for regular deepening of the Taman Pusat Kepong retention pond to maintain its capacity.

Concerns also extend to a proposed development near the Jinjang flood retention pond, which he worries could further reduce its capacity.

The development, pending DBKL approval, includes three high-rise blocks and could increase flood risks, as noted in a social impact assessment.

Meanwhile, Loh hoped the proposal to deepen the Jinjang flood retention pond would not remain idle talk.

"The pond's capacity has shrunk by more than 50% since the development projects around it started. Hence, it is essential for it to be deepened so that it is enough to cater to rainwater during downpours," he said.

He also called on DBKL and DID to consider compensating the residents for the damage they suffered during the flood in August last year.

"The root cause of the flood was the insufficient capacity of Sungai Keroh.

"We have been pushing for a compensation from DBKL and DID, but they have referred it to the Social Welfare Department, and we ended up not receiving any compensation.

"The residents need to replace their damaged furniture, which is not cheap. Some money could really help them," he said.

DBKL's response

In a statement, DBKL acknowledged the drain issues in Jalan Ambong, Persiaran Mergastua and Taman Pusat Kepong, and said action would be taken in phases.

"Upgrading works on the drains will be done in phases based on the needs, level of complaints received and available budget," it said in a statement.

It also said it had carried out several steps to ensure the optimal condition of the drainage system in Kepong.

"These include cleaning the drains regularly, upgrading the drainage's outlet and repairing damaged drain structure based on current needs," it said.

City Hall also urged the residents' associations to raise awareness on the importance of taking care of public facilities among the local community.

"The residents should also refrain from littering in the drains to prevent floods," it said.

DBKL also confirmed the short, medium and long-term strategies listed by Ooi, but said some of those works were under DID's jurisdiction.

These include maintaining and deepening the flood retention ponds in Taman Pusat Kepong and Jinjang, proposed construction a flood retention wall alongside Sungai Keroh between Taman Antoi and Taman Pusat Kepong, as well as the proposed relocation of Sungai Keroh's sluice gate.

"DBKL had also taken early steps by upgrading the drains in Taman Antoi in August 2022 to reduce the risk of flooding in the area," DBKL added in the statement.

DID has not responded to *StarMetro*'s queries on the matter as of press time.