

LETTERS

malay mail

17/5/2016

mls 18



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MALAY MAIL

TUESDAY

MAY 17, 2016

No mystery to KL flash floods

THE flash floods in the city last Thursday following a downpour resulted in 15 vehicles submerged in flood water and hundreds of motorists trapped in their vehicles. Such flash floods have become a common occurrence after every downpour.

Although there were no casualties, commuters and motorists suffered serious inconvenience, damage to their vehicles and financial losses.

The rainfall was unusually heavy, but the main contributing factors to the flash floods are the poor drainage system and clogged drains in Kuala Lumpur, a city where rapid development is taking place with more buildings being erected and road side stalls mushrooming.

It is obvious the drainage system is unable to cope with the rapid development now taking place.

There is also the poor drainage system at construction sites near the areas hit by the flash floods.

Silt traps built at some project sites are poorly maintained and as a result, sediments and debris from the construction activities clog the drains, contributing to the flash floods.

Property developers and their contractors should strictly observe the Urban Stormwater Management Manual — the drainage design guideline issued by the Department of Irrigation and Drainage. The manual provides a guide for erosion and sediment control during earthworks and installation of gross pollutant traps along drainage channels.

However, lack of supervision and enforcement by relevant authorities tends to perpetuate the poor maintenance culture, not only at construction sites but also the city's drainage system in general.

The views expressed by two former KL mayors are absolutely right when they stated the city's drainage system needs a massive overhaul.

Despite our economy progressing rapidly towards a high-income nation status in less than five years, our civic mindedness is still lagging. There are still Malaysians who have no qualms about throwing rubbish into the drains and clogging them, obstructing smooth water flow.

Indiscriminate dumping of garbage into drains by hawkers or roadside stall operators can be seen not only in KL but also other parts of the country.

Some street cleaners make it a habit to sweep dirt and debris into the outlets of roadside drains.

The poor habit and maintenance culture, combined with weak enforcement and inadequate federal and state budgets for maintenance, has resulted in clogged drains that are not regularly cleaned and broken drains not being repaired.

There is an urgent need for a major re-look into the city's drainage system and implement further improvements. This requires financial allocations for preventive and mitigating measures. They include, among others, risk assessments of flash floods, construction of urban drainage system infrastructure

and strict enforcement against irresponsible public, building contractors, hawkers and others.

With construction activities taking place in various parts of the city, the authorities must come down hard on irresponsible contractors and builders who pay scant attention to the protection of the environment. In particular, the authorities must act against those who flout building by-laws and the Street and Drainage Act.

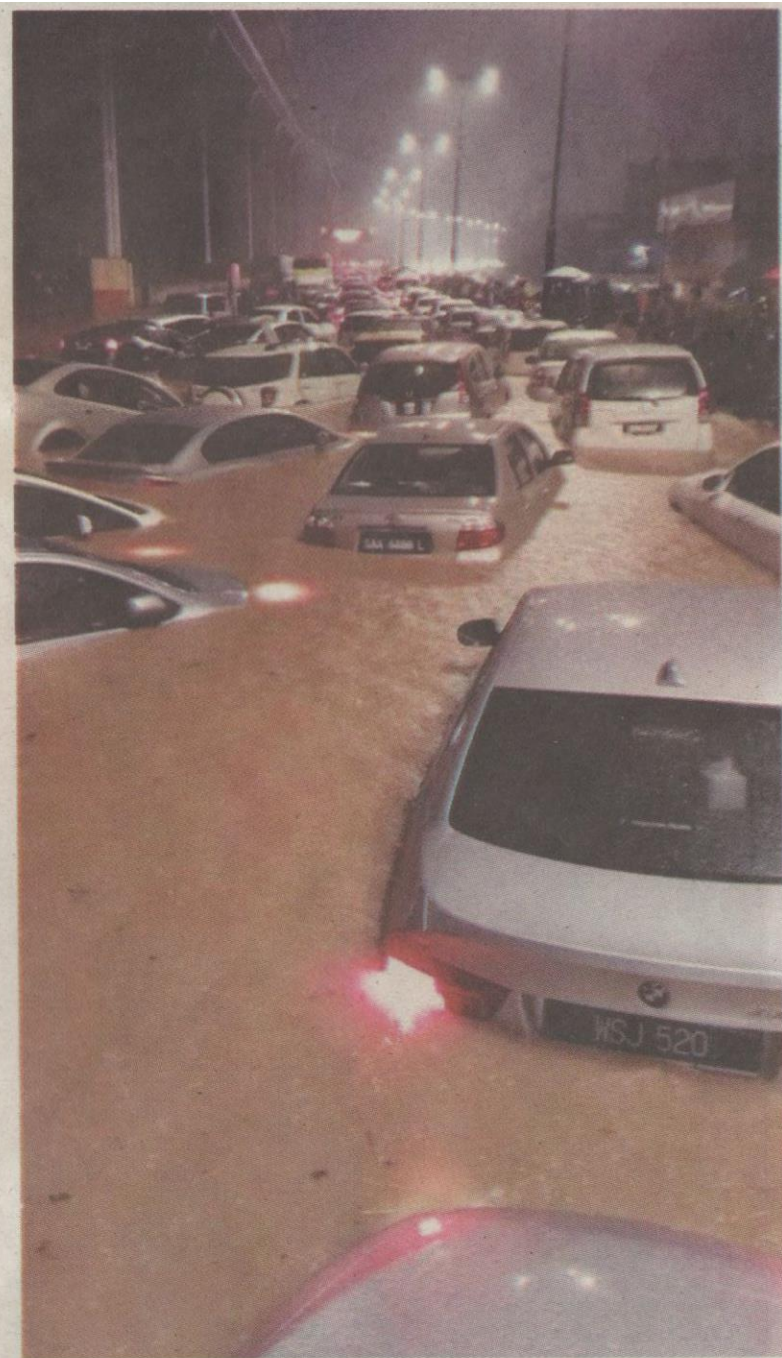
The authorities should not hesitate to act against any member of the public who dumps rubbish and garbage indiscriminately into the drains. Ongoing awareness programmes should be conducted and the public must be responsible in taking care of the environment.

The government must be prepared to invest in drainage improvement in KL as well as other flood-prone areas in the country. With proper planning and investment in a sustainable urban drainage system, the country will be able to not only prevent flash floods in cities and towns but also portray a good image to foreign visitors.

The time has come for the government and the private sector to see to the emergence of a new mindset which gives emphasis to the development of a strong maintenance culture.

Unless drastic action is taken to deal with the causes of flash floods, more damage can be expected in the future.

TAN SRI LEE LAM THYE
FORMER KL CITY HALL
ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER



Floods like those that hit Kuala Lumpur last Thursday have become a common occurrence after every downpour.