

soundbites

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ALL CHOKED UP

Congestion in Jalan Kelang Lama has worsened over the years, resulting in gridlock even after rush hour. While there is a proposed plan for monorail system extending here, residents want DBKL to put a stop to development until it is in place.

Public transport first

Transportation should be sorted out first before approving development plans, especially ones that are high in density in an already overdeveloped area like Jalan Kelang Lama. The KL Draft Plan is still pending and projects continue to be pushed through. What kind of town planning is that when everything will be afterthought.

Example of bad planning

Jalan Kelang Lama is a classic example of bad town planning. Despite being a prime and expensive location, it is a pain to get in out of the place daily. Despite all that, condominiums continue to be built and people are still buying these properties.

No regards for residents

Development to go on? So there is zero regard for the poor residents there? I avoid Old Klang Road like the plague. Really feel for those who have to endure the jam right in front of their houses.

Central location is best

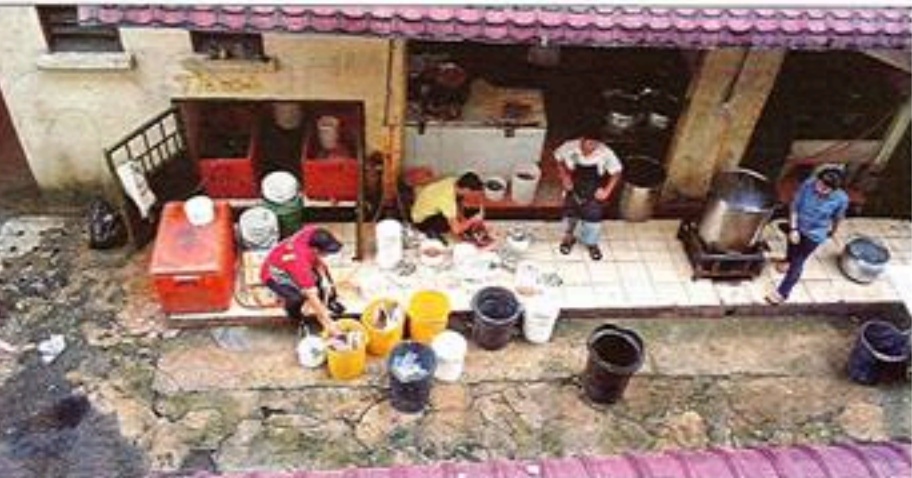
I live in Old Klang Road and sometimes, my friends who live in Seremban and Nilai reach the city centre faster than me when we leave home at the same time. Living in a central location is not the wisest choice in my opinion. You think many times before going out of your house as you have to battle the jam before reaching your destination.

Common bacteria and viruses that can cause food poisoning, how they contaminate food and effects.

 <p><b>Staphylococcus aureus</b></p> <p>Can be transferred from stray hair, pus from boils or pimples or handlers who pick their noses during food preparation.</p> <p>Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of appetite, severe abdominal cramps, mild fever.</p>	 <p><b>Bacillus cereus</b></p> <p>Happens when cooked rice is left without proper refrigeration. Food, rice dishes can be at risk.</p> <p>Watery diarrhoea and vomiting.</p>	 <p><b>Vibrio parahaemolyticus</b></p> <p>When seafood, like prawns or squid, come in touch with sewage water. High possibility of contamination when prepared near toilets and drains.</p> <p>In serious cases, sudden chills, shock and skin lesions.</p>	 <p><b>Escherichia coli</b></p> <p>From drinking impure water (including ice), consuming unpasteurised dairy products and undercooked meat.</p> <p>In violent strains, damage to the kidneys and impairment to the pancreas and nervous system.</p>	 <p><b>Salmonella</b></p> <p>Can be passed on by stray animals who come in contact with uncooked meats or from improperly cleaned fruits and vegetables still bearing traces of manure.</p> <p>Patients can be carriers without developing symptoms, but there is a danger that food prepared by them will cause other to suffer from food poisoning.</p>	 <p><b>Hepatitis A</b></p> <p>From food handlers who do not wash their hands after toilet visits and in eateries where customers themselves can contaminate food after visiting filthy washrooms.</p> <p>In older people, can cause severe liver inflammation leading to liver failure. Though treatable with antiviral drugs, some patients may suffer a relapse after three months.</p>	 <p><b>Campylobacter</b></p> <p>Risk is present in places that reheat their food more than once and use dirty dishcloths. Can also happen when the same chopping board is used for meat and raw vegetables.</p> <p>Serious cases have shown the debilitating effects of Guillain-Barre syndrome where the immune system attacks itself.</p>	 <p><b>Listeria</b></p> <p>From ignoring expiry dates on canned and processed foods. Cans with dents pose a high risk.</p> <p>Meningitis in newborns. Bacteria can penetrate the walls of the human gut and go into the uterus.</p>
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Source: Department of Food Science, Faculty of Food Science and Technology, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

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Some restaurants use the back lanes to prepare food. —filepic

# Malaysians okay with dirty eateries

Unhygienic restaurants continue to receive support from customers who disregard food safety standards



story by GRACE CHEN

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YOU could cut the tension in the air with a knife when the Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ) Health Department was sealing a dirty restaurant in Taman Puncak Jalil, Seri Kembangan, for 14 days.

MPSJ councillor Anbarasan Murugesu took StarMetro to the upper floor of the shoplot. The owners had converted it into a kitchen without council approval.

On the way upstairs, flies flitted around a dark, grimy passage.

At the kitchen entrance, open sacks of rice grains sat on the floor.

A slight wind blowing in through the windows brought whiffs of foul smells.

Just a few steps away from the kitchen were the toilets.

Inside the kitchen, broken egg shells and dried pandan leaves littered the floor, which looked like it had not been washed for weeks.

Just below the sink was a shallow drain that ran to a raggedy hole in a facade wall. This is so that food waste and sillage from the sink can slosh through a pipe all the way into the back-alley drain.

Downstairs, a curry cesspool stewing in the drains.

But the most disturbing sight was to see customers continuing to eat their food as enforcement officers were sealing the premises.

Catherine James, who lives in the area, was tucking into a plate of fried noodles and chicken, and did not even realise the premises was being sealed.

She went a little green in the face when told that the premises was being shut down for not observing proper food hygiene.

The number of eateries the Health Ministry (MOH) was compelled to close in the past two years reflected a poor awareness among Malaysians

on food safety and hygiene.

"In 2015, a total of 124,254 food premises were inspected. Of this 2,422 (1.9%) were ordered closed.

"A total of 8,210 compounds were issued to food premises operators for offences committed under the Food Hygiene Regulations 2009," said MOH director-general Danuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

The situation shows no signs of improving.

Up till March this year, 645 of the 28,026 food premises inspected were ordered to close.

Already, 3,418 compounds have been issued for various offences.

A circular issued by the ministry on Food Hygiene Regulations 2009, which was fully enforced from January 2014, stated 33 compoundable offences for food operators.

They range from licensing to the transportation of meat, cooked food and raw fruits as well as vegetables.

Maximum penalties include fines not exceeding RM10,000 or not more than two years' jail, or both.

Food handlers including hawkers must be licensed by their respective councils who will ensure that they have been vaccinated against typhoid.

A food handlers training programme was also started by MOH in 1996 in preparation for the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

Today, 251 entities are recognised by the Government as training centres.

Those applying for restaurant and hawker licences are advised to attend the course.

Continual public patronage is the reason why dirty eateries thrive, said MPSJ Corporate and Strategic Management Department deputy director Muhammad Azli Minwan.

He cited an example of an eatery in USJ 10, Subang Jaya, which had been issued with 30 compounds but continued to run on full house daily.

"People who care about their health should give dirty eateries a wide berth.

"But in Malaysia, a dirty food stall or restaurant is not a deterrent to customers," he observed.

It does not help that Malaysians have a "forgiving" and tolerant nature towards dirty food handlers. Customers should rightly boycott eateries that are seen practising unsanitary habits.

At food courts and stalls, hawkers and restaurant workers openly peel prawns and cockles beside drains, reuse water already logged with food waste to wash dirty dishes, and store food in holey containers which are often seen left on roadsides or on wet kitchen floors.

Now with the influx of foreign workers operating food stalls, no one seems to be questioning if they have acquired the proper health checks and vaccinations.

Dirty eateries have proliferated in office buildings too.

In one such building in Shah Alam, a cafe was seen offering customers food on crockery speckled with dried gravy.

Flies teemed over the buffet line and the cashier-cum-waiter was smoking.

"People do not mind eating in such dirty environment, until they fall very sick, that is," said Universiti Putra Malaysia Food Science Department Associate Prof Farinazleen Mohamed Ghazali.

Farinazleen, a microbiologist and food safety expert, said the public might change their minds after looking at things from a microscopic level.

"Microorganisms in food can produce toxins under dirty conditions and wreak havoc on the body," she said.

She cited the well-known incident of food poisoning at a wedding in Sungai Petani, Kedah, which claimed the lives of four victims in 2013, and of 40 schoolchildren in Buntong, Perak, the same year who had to be admitted for treatment after eating contaminated fried rice.

In Malaysia, a case of food poisoning involving more than two patients can be legally declared as an outbreak.

But alarm bells are not often set off because patients who may have eaten at a shop in Cheras may be liv-

## Microorganisms in food can produce toxins under dirty conditions and wreak havoc on the body.

Associate Prof Farinazleen Mohamed Ghazali

ing in Subang.

Hence when the person falls sick, the victim will most likely go to a clinic in Subang.

Meanwhile, another patient who has eaten at the same shop may seek treatment at a clinic in Bangsar.

As medical records of the two clinics are not correlated, there is no way to prompt the authorities to conduct a check at the eatery in Cheras, unless they get a tip-off from the public.

Farinazleen advised the public to be more selective when frequenting food outlets.

"The rules of food safety are easy to follow. For example, if food has to be left out, it has to be stored either above 60°C or, in the case of cut fruits and dairy, below 5°C.

"Raw meat must be refrigerated and must never be mixed with cooked dishes.

"Handlers must wash their hands before and after touching food.

"And most importantly, those in the food business must operate in a premises with running tap water," she said.

## What The Public Say

 <p><b>Michael Lahari, in sales and marketing industry, eats out three to four times a week.</b> Hawker food is economical and tasty. It's also convenient (no need to cook).</p>	 <p><b>Marissa Yew, full-time mother, eats out three to four times a week.</b> I love having breakfast at hawker stalls for the variety. I admit that I tolerate dirty stalls.</p>	 <p><b>Chew Kon Woh, mostly eats at home, but loves going to the coffeshop in the mornings.</b> The wonderful thing about hawker stalls is they don't have GST and service charge.</p>	 <p><b>Nor Kadri Digiri, contractor, eats out six days a week.</b> I cannot afford to eat at restaurants. I like to go to a "wong" because it is also a nice place to hang out.</p>
 <p><b>Kannan Muniandy, lorry driver, likes taking his family out to eat.</b> We don't trust stalls that offer too many varieties or 24-hour restaurants because they may recycle their food. We've seen some of them turning the fried chicken into another dish later in the day.</p>	 <p><b>Mohd Hanis Nordin, construction engineer. Bachelor who eats out three times a day.</b> The stalls near my workplace are cheap and service is friendly. These are my standards for a "gerai makan." But I am very particular about cleanliness and will avoid places that are infested with flies.</p>	 <p><b>Marimuthu Renganathan, contractor. Eats out no less than three times a day.</b> As long as it fills my stomach, I am fine. But I will do a quick "inspection" to check if the place is clean.</p>	 <p><b>May Tan and Saizatul Ashikin Shahanul, regular lunch buddies at work.</b> One thing we cannot stand is the smell of rubbish near food stalls.</p>

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