

# Council says Kajang safe, but residents beg to differ

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Photos by GEETHA KRISHNAN

**T**HE Kajang Municipal Council (MPKj) claims that it is the third local authority in the country to have achieved safe city standard based on the Housing and Local Government's 23-step guideline to fulfilling the safe city concept.

However, many residents, especially those living in the older parts of the town, are not convinced that the municipality has achieved the safe city standard.

The ministry's 23-step guideline to safe city standard enjoins the authorities to, among others, provide better lighting at five-foot-ways and back and side streets, increase security patrols at housing areas, install alarm systems, ensure pedestrian walkways are well maintained, provide police beat bases and install safety mirrors and closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras at crime-prone areas.

MPKj's Planning Department director Nizam Sahari said the council had implemented 22 of the 23 steps in various areas of the municipality.

"The only step MPKj has not accomplished is the common sharing of information on crime-related activities through the GIS-based mapping system.

"MPKj has its own GIS mapping system. However, the police have not set up their GIS system so we are not linked," Nizam.

Nizam said the rising incidence of crime in the country had led the Cabinet to suggest the 23 steps to prevent crime during its meeting on Jan



Zoharah ... a car theft and break-ins in her neighbourhood make her feel unsafe

28, 2004.

The five critical and immediate steps each town and housing area has to take into consideration include separation of areas from walkways to the main road, affixing bollards, clearing public areas blocked by overgrown foliage, making public areas such as pedestrian bridges visible to all to prevent snatch thefts and muggings and



brightening up of pedestrian bridges, tunnels, car parks and public areas.

Apart from the local authorities, the task of carrying out the 23 steps involves other government agencies such as the police, Urban and Rural Planning Department (JPBD), the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF) and other crime-fighting agencies.

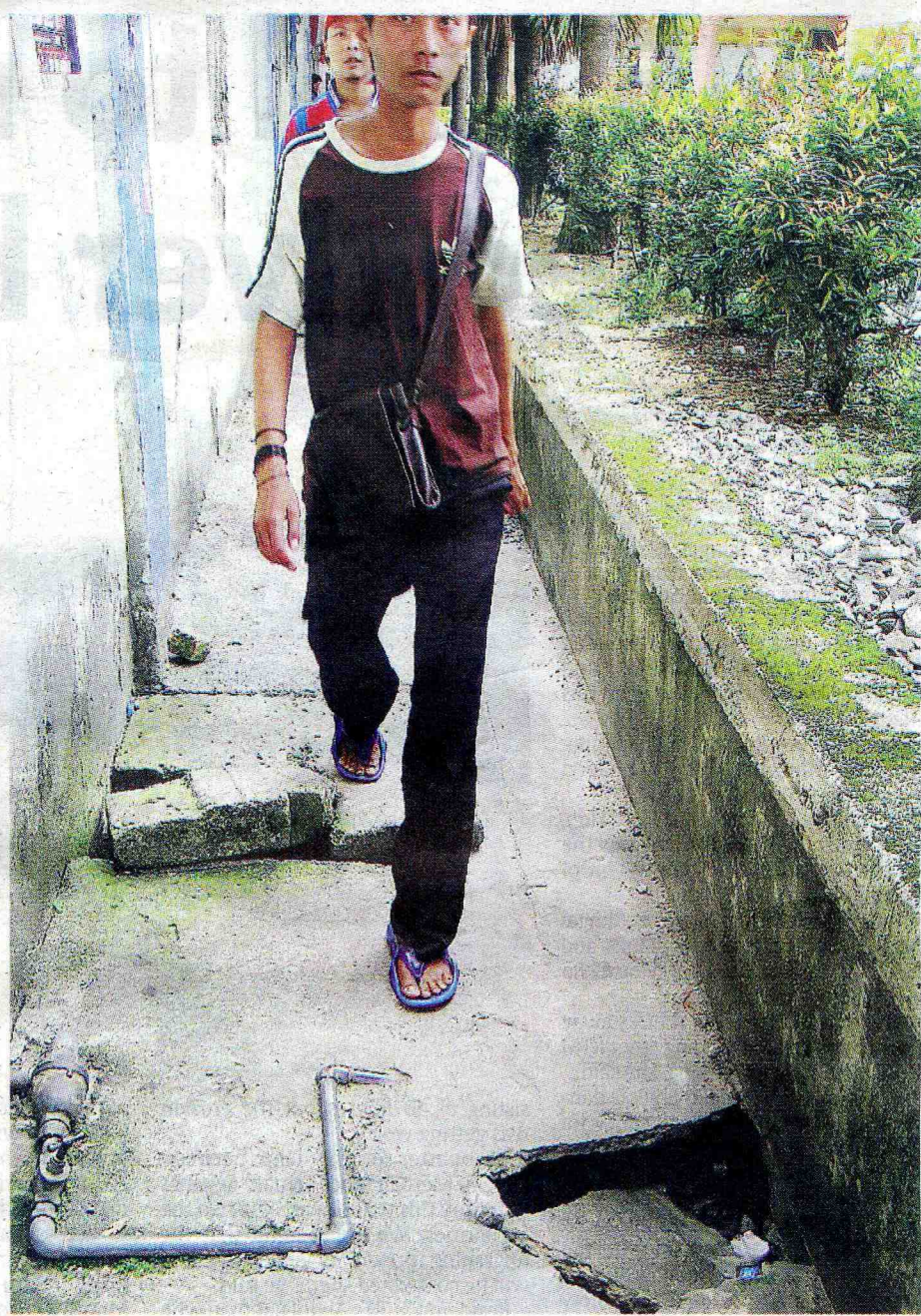
Nizam said MPKj's Safe City Technical Committee, which was set up in August, comprised various government agencies like the police, fire department, the Selangor Islamic Affairs Department (Jais), the Drainage and Irrigation Department, the Hulu Langat Land Office and NGOs.

"The implementation of the concept is progressing in stages but we have already achieved 22 steps in our urban zones," he said.

However, Nizam admitted that the participation of housing developers was crucial in ensuring the objectives of a safe city were met, especially at newer housing development projects.

"This is because MPKj does not have funds to fully implement the concept. It is easier to implement the safety steps at new housing development projects.

But what do residents have to say about this? Do they agree that MPKj has made the municipality a safe place for them and their families?



People could get hurt walking along broken five-foot-ways like this in Kajang.

Zoharah Omar of Desa Mewah, Semenyih, said residents at newer housing areas like Bandar Baru Bangi, Saujana Impian and Bandar Sungai Long were far luckier than those in older areas like Semenyih and old Bangi town.

She said in terms of road safety, there was no traffic light at the T-junction to Bandar Baru Technology even though many accidents had occurred there.

Zoharah said she no longer felt safe as thefts were becoming rampant in her housing area.

"My car has been broken into and the CD player was stolen. My neighbour's car was stolen during the fasting month and the car was parked in the driveway.

"Another neighbour's house was broken into and there were other attempted break-ins," she said, adding that a lot of water meters had been stolen, too.

Due to the frequency of break-ins, residents got together and formed a Rukun Tetangga and engaged security guards during the recent Hari Raya holidays.

Desa Bunga Raya resident Robert Chelliah said he did not think the Kajang municipality could be recog-

nised as a safe city.

"The authorities have a reactive attitude in addressing a situation because they act when there's a complaint but after that, it is all forgotten," he said.

He said the lighting behind his house was poor and due to this, thieves broke into his neighbour's house by cutting the fence.

Chelliah said residents welcomed the idea of more police patrols in the area.

He said an abandoned police beat base near Hugo Supermarket had not seen the presence of the cops in a long time.

He also said MPKj should ensure the grass at playgrounds was regularly cut and shrubs and foliage trimmed periodically.

Taman Sungai Chua resident Kuldeep Singh said the housing estate was an old area and often neglected by the authorities.

"The roads here are riddled with potholes and street lighting is poor," he said.

"There should be more patrolling by the police at older housing estates and the overgrown foliage near the pedestrian bridge leading to the flyover to Jalan Sungai Chua should be trimmed," he said.



MPKj may have made sure that billboards do not block the view of people walking on this pedestrian bridge in town but what about the safety of those using the pedestrian bridge at Jalan Sungai Chua (inset) where thick undergrowth could provide an ambush spot for muggers and rapists.



Only newer housing estates in Kajang like Sunway Semenyih provide residents with security features like this guard house.