

Nowhere for water to flow

Drains blocked with utility cables one reason for recent floods, says Alam Flora



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UTILITY cables and wires found running through drains have been cited to be among the reason for the massive flood that hit Kuala Lumpur last week bringing traffic to a standstill.

Another factor is the badly constructed drains in some parts of the city where the flood hit.

This inferior work was revealed by Alam Flora chief executive officer Datuk Mohd Zain Hassan during a three-hour walkabout in three flood hotspots in the city yesterday.

He removed randomly selected manhole covers to show reporters the shoddy work and low standard of contractors in constructing drains and laying electrical cables.

The areas he visited were a location in Jalan Kia Peng, and another two area in Changkat Bukit Bintang.

Last week, a two-hour downpour caused flash floods in Jalan Pantai Baru, Jalan Bangsar, Jalan Lingkungan Budi in Universiti Malaya, Jalan Semantan and Jalan Tuanku Abdul Halim.

The floods that brought traffic to a standstill, had submerged more than 115 vehicles.

Expressing his apology to the people, Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor had reportedly said that copious amount of rain, that reached a high of 122.8mm per hour, was the main cause of the flooding.

Because of these cables and other obstacles, we cannot clean the drains using our modern machinery.

Datuk Mohd Zain Hassan

In Changkat Bukit Bintang, dozens of exposed manholes revealed the drains were choked with rubbish including polystyrene packs and plastics that were tangled with electrical cables and other matter.

"This is one of the reasons why Kuala Lumpur's roads are flooded.

"Drains are often blocked by fibre optic cables like these," Mohd Zain said pointing at a clogged drain in the area.

"The wires and cables are all over the place.

"I am not an expert in electrical cables but that certainly does not look legal to me."

He also touched on the uneven surface of crudely built drains that lacked quality.

Mohd Zain also said numerous shops and restaurants in the area had carried out extension works and had blocked drains in the process.

"These obstacles are the challenges Alam Flora contractors have to overcome when carrying out cleaning work.

"Because of these cables and other obstacles, we cannot clean the drains using our modern

machinery.

"We have to resort to manual work so we do not damage the cables which are not supposed to be there in the first place.

"So a 15-minute job takes 45 minutes to do," he added.

Mohd Zain said restaurants in the area had to install grease traps to ensure food waste did not end up in drains.

He said restaurant operators, in the city, dumped more than 130 tonnes of fat, oil and grease into the drains last year.

Mohd Zain illustrated just how much that was, saying: "We could probably fill four normal-sized swimming pools with all that gunk."

It was previously reported that grease from eateries were also the main contributor to the overflow of sewer pipes.

"We can use a sewer jet to flush out the gunk, but we are hampered by the multiple illegal cables, wires and pipe systems in the drains as well as pails, pots and everything else restaurant owners place over the drains.

Alam Flora's job scope, he said, involved cleaning the 4,659km network of drains in the city and the huge task could only be done once a month.

He said for flood-prone areas, the drains had to be cleaned once a week.

"We are not shirking on our duties here.

"But we need everyone's help to make Kuala Lumpur a clean city," he added.

In an online statement Tenaga Nasional Berhad general manager for distribution (Kuala Lumpur) Datuk Lim Yew Soon said the electrical cables in the drains were in the process of being removed.



1 These extensions by restaurants in Bukit Bintang have blocked the drains, causing water to overflow after a downpour.

2 Mohd Zain (right) showing utility cables in a drain in Bukit Bintang. On his right is Alam Flora's FT State Manager Abdul Sukor Zakaria.

3 This drain in Bukit Bintang is clogged with electrical cables.

— Photos:
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