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Car-free day takes many by surprise

BY VJENTI NAIK AND YASMIN AHMAD KAMIL



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KUALA LUMPUR City Hall's plan to implement the "Go Green Car-Free Morning" on several major roads in Kuala Lumpur every first Sunday of the month starting next year, has taken many business people and residents in the affected areas by surprise.

Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Ahmad Phasal Talib made the announcement during the recent launch of Kuala Lumpur Extravaganza 2014.

He said these roads would be "vehicle-free" from 7.30am until 9.30am starting on Jan 5, to give walkers, joggers, skateboarders, rollerbladers and cyclists, among others, a chance to use these stretches.

The roads involved along the 6km stretch are Jalan Raja Laut, Jalan Sultan Ismail, Jalan Ampang, Jalan P. Ramlee, Jalan Pinang, Jalan Raja Chulan, Jalan Imbi, and Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman.

In a statement, Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) said the initiative was to promote a greener city and reduce global warming.

However, many feel that it is an ill-thought-out plan.

Businessmen Eric Koh, who owns a property in the Golden Triangle, said it would cause inconvenience to residents and tourists alike.

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"The roads are located in commercial areas and tourist hubs. How can DBKL restrict vehicles from coming in?"

"Businessmen are trying to draw tourists by having various promotions but how can it be done by limiting transport options?"

"We cannot expect everyone to walk," he said.

Koh pointed out that many hotels were located in the area, too.

"People need to get in and out of the area at all times," he added.

Meanwhile, real estate agent and Bukit Bintang resident Johnny Leong said although the idea was good, it was not feasible.

"People nowadays do not feel safe walking because of snatch thieves and vagrants.

"Women and children will feel less safe, especially in the early morning as the streets are deserted

"DBKL should provide safe pedestrian walkways first before implementing such a programme," he said.

Bukit Bintang resident Katherine Lim was also surprised to learn that even buses and taxis would not be allowed in during that period.

"I depend on public transport to get around as I do not own a car. Since it is only going to be held one day in a month, I guess people can plan ahead but what about those who are caught by surprise."

Meanwhile, avid cyclist Andrew Ng said the "car-free" roads might encourage more cyclists to ride in the city.

"Usually, most cyclists prefer more scenic and natural settings but this may be an incentive for them to cycle in KL," he said.

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