

AKHBAR : UTUSAN MALAYSIA
MUKA SURAT : 35
RUANGAN : DALAM NEGERI

400 parkir ditambah di HSA

JOHOR BAHRU: Kerajaan negeri menyediakan hampir 400 petak parkir sementara di hadapan Hospital Sultanah Aminah (HSA), di sini bagi menampung keperluan orang ramai di hospital tersebut.

Menteri Besar, Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi berkata, bagi fasa pertama, sebanyak 178 petak parkir dijangka siap akhir bulan ini.

"Lebih 200 lagi dilaksanakan dalam fasa kedua mengikut keperluan melibatkan jumlah keseluruhan tanah melebihi dua hektar," katanya pada majlis pecah tanah tapak letak kenderaan HSA, di sini.

Hospital tertua di Johor itu mempunyai sebanyak 920 lot parkir untuk kegunaan awam dan kakitangan diwartakan di kawasan hospital dan tambahan 320 lot yang tidak diwartakan dan tidak berturap kepada kakitangan.

AKHBAR : SINAR HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 6
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Kerajaan perlu mansuh SST elak pengguna TCM terbeban

SHAH ALAM - Pelaksanaan Cukai Jualan dan Perkhidmatan (SST) terhadap perniagaan yang menyediakan kemudahan perubatan bagi sektor tradisional dan komplementari (TCM) dikhawatiri membebankan rakyat yang bergantung dengan rawatan itu khususnya golongan B40.

Aktivis sosial, Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye berkata, walaupun pelaksanaannya dilihat sebagai langkah menambah pendapatan negara, ia dibimbangi akan menyebabkan kenaikan harga barangan jualan yang seterusnya terpaksa ditanggung pengguna dan pembeli terakhir.

"Ini sekali gus meningkatkan bebanan rakyat yang terpaksa bergantung terhadap rawatan TCM demi menjalani kehidupan seharian.

"Justeru, cukai SST terhadap sektor TCM dapat dikecualikan bagi membantu rakyat yang memerlukan rawatan khasnya bagi mereka yang berpendapatan rendah dan bergantung terhadap perubatan alter-



LAM THYE

natif seperti ayurveda, sin seh dan rawatan Islam," katanya dalam satu kenyataan pada Ahad.

Terdahulu, bermula Mac, kemudahan TCM seperti kedai dan perkhidmatan perubatan tradisional Cina dengan perolehan tahunan RM500,000 setiap tahun perlu mengenakan lapan peratus dalam SST.

Dalam pada itu, Lam Thye berkata, sektor TCM adalah keperluan pesakit kronik bagi semua kaum di negara ini dan bukan bersifat hiburan yang wajar dikenakan cukai.

"Ia membabitkan pelbagai bangsa yang mendapatkan rawatan alternatif daripada sektor tradisional untuk merawat penyakit seperti strok, tulang belakang dan sebagainya.

"Cukai dikenakan terhadap mereka memberi beban terhadap pesakit yang sudah pun menderita. Justeru pelaksanaan cukai terhadap sektor TCM perlu dikaji semula kerana ia turut merangkumi sektor kesihatan," katanya.

AKHBAR : KOSMO
MUKA SURAT : 10
RUANGAN : NEGARA

2024 tahun kurus atau kekal obesiti

"AZAM tahun 2024 nak kurus, bersenam setiap hari dan mahu makan makanan rendah kalori."

Itu antara azam yang sering didengar setiap kali tirai tahun baharu dibuka.

Namun, dalam masa sama, penulis mendapati setiap hari ada sahaja tambahan peniaga baharu yang muncul menawarkan makanan viral, sekali gus menyumbang kepada keghairahan orang ramai untuk makan dengan banyak.

Kehadiran peniaga-peniaga ini sememangnya lubuk utama untuk mendapatkan pelbagai aneka makanan, malah di tempat bersukan juga sering muncul gerai-gerai kecil yang menawarkan menu segera.

Tidak dinafikan, makanan adalah sumber keperluan utama untuk manusia kekal hidup, namun berapa ramai yang berpegang pada prinsip berhenti sebelum kenyang?

Tinjauan Kesihatan dan Morbiditi Kebangsaan (NHMS) pada tahun 2019 mendapati, kira-kira 50.1 peratus rakyat negara ini mempunyai masalah berat badan berlebihan, sekali gus mencatatkan kadar prevalen tertinggi dalam kalangan penduduk Asia Tenggara.

Selain orang dewasa, golongan kanak-kanak dan remaja juga menjadi penyumbang besar kepada jumlah keseluruhan rakyat Malaysia yang gemuk.



Terdahulu, Timbalan Menteri Kesihatan, Lukanisman Awang Sauni berkata, Malaysia kini menduduki tempat kedua tertinggi bagi obesiti dalam kalangan kanak-kanak dan remaja di Asia Tenggara.

Katanya, penemuan ini amat membimbangkan kerana ia menunjukkan trend yang semakin meningkat.

"Hasil kajian NHMS menunjukkan peningkatan prevalen berat badan berlebihan dan obesiti dalam kalangan kanak-kanak berumur 13 hingga 17 tahun daripada 24.6 peratus pada 2012 kepada 30.5 peratus pada 2022.

"Kanak-kanak yang berlebihan berat badan atau obes berisiko menghidap penyakit tidak berjangkit berkaitan pemakanan seperti diabetes dan hipertensi," jelasnya.

Selain itu, Kementerian Sumber Manusia dalam kenyataan lalu mendedahkan sebanyak 42 peratus daripada 600,000 pekerja di Malaysia yang menjalani Saringan Kesihatan Pertubuhan Keselamatan So-

sial (Perkeso) atau HSP tahun lalu dikenal pasti mengalami masalah obesiti.

Terbaharu, Ketua Perangkawan Malaysia, Datuk Seri Dr. Mohd. Uzir Mahidin berkata, hasil pelaksanaan Banci Ekonomi 2023 (bagi tahun rujukan 2022) melibatkan 1.2 juta pertubuhan di Malaysia mendapati subsektor makanan dan minuman menyumbang 14.4 peratus kepada ekonomi negara.

Sebelum ini, Persekutuan Obesiti Dunia meramalkan lebih separuh penduduk dunia akan dikategorikan sebagai obes menjelang tahun 2035 berbanding hobi 'kuat makan'.

Hasil beberapa kajian kesihatan yang dilaporkan itu jelas menunjukkan bahawa kesedaran rakyat Malaysia untuk mengamalkan gaya hidup lebih sihat masih rendah apabila 'pelaburan' ke atas pembelian makanan kekal tinggi.

Penulis juga percaya, setiap tahun antara azam tahun baharu rakyat Malaysia adalah mahu kurus, tetapi percayalah juga ramai yang 'hangat-hangat tahi ayam' dan membawa implan tersebut ke tahun seterusnya.

Menjadi satu persoalan, adakah tahun 2024 rakyat Malaysia akan kekal menjadi penyumbang manusia gemuk di dunia atau beralih kepada aktiviti senaman dan pemakanan sihat untuk jadi lebih sihat?

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 5
RUANGAN : NATION

Too close for comfort

Penang's booming pigeon population a menace to health

By IMRAN HILMY
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GEORGE TOWN: While Penang is known as a magnet to visitors from all over the world, the state is also swarming with pigeons.

In the last five years, the population of pigeons has risen sharply in the northern state renowned for its street food and cultural heritage.

In 2018, 3,419 pigeons were caught and the numbers have since soared – 3,811 in 2019; 6,848 in 2020; 5,572 (2021); 5,020 (2022); and 5,735 as up to Oct 31 last year.

Fauziah Samad, 56, a rice seller at her flat in Mak Mandin on the mainland, had to momentarily stop her business in 2021 after her five-year-old son developed symptoms of psittacosis, which is mainly associated with pigeon droppings.

"My son loved to play with the pigeons near my stall and feed them. One day, he suddenly came down with a high fever and cough, and had to be rushed to the hospital."

"He was diagnosed with inflammation of the brain. I was so worried that I stopped working for nearly a month to look after him," she said, adding that the birds would usually crowd around her stall to look for leftovers.

According to health experts, psittacosis is transmitted to humans who inhale the dried droppings, respiratory secretions and feather dust of birds infected with the *Chlamydia psittaci* bacteria.

A pigeon lover who wanted to be known only as Rose said she fell sick with a mild lung infection six years ago due to what she believed was overexposure to the birds.

"I used to feed them outside my house every evening. Their droppings and feathers were all over my porch."

"The doctors said that was how I got sick. Now, when I see them, I try to avoid getting too close," she said.

Ornithologist Dr Gino Ooi, who owns Penang Bird Park, said while some people found feeding pigeons entertaining or relaxing, they were not aware of the health risks involved.

"I am a bird lover, so I don't like to describe a bird in a bad way. But I don't want us to trigger a



What a mess: A car at the Rifle Range car park is covered with pigeon and crow droppings. — LIM BENG TATT/The Star

disease outbreak.

"Pigeons spread the disease quickly because they live in dense flocks close to humans."

"The droppings could spread diseases through airborne fungal spores and bacteria, and Penang has a lot of pigeons," he said.

State local government committee chairman Jason H'ng said the Penang Island City Council (MBPP) has identified 28 areas as pigeon hotspots on the island.

"We have put up 31 signboards advising the people against feeding birds or animals in public areas."

"MBPP always reminds the public not to leave behind food particles indiscriminately, which could attract all types of animals and birds," he said.

Stern action, he warned, could be taken under Section 47(1)(g) of the Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974 and bylaws (Cleanliness and Public Safety) MPPP 1980 against anyone littering in public.

H'ng said the council had, among others, stepped up its pigeon-catching exercise from twice to four times a week based on the complaints received.

"We also fix bird repellents on

suitable locations and conduct joint operations with other related departments," he said.

H'ng said MBPP was also trying out a birth control programme called "Ovocontrol", which uses a special type of feed to reduce the laying of eggs by pigeons.

"A special trap for pigeons was also procured recently for a trial run," he said.

Over on the mainland, the Seberang Prai City Council (MBSP) has taken several measures to reduce the pigeon population, including biweekly operations to look for their nests as well as a public awareness programmes in targeted areas.

"Since 2018, we have conducted 62 operations at MBSP-owned markets and food complexes, and in residential areas."

"We managed to capture 5,140 pigeons," said Mayor Datuk Azhar Arshad.

Malaysian Nature Society adviser D. Kanda Kumar urged people to stop feeding pigeons because "naturally, like other animals, they know how to find their own food."

A check at several places here such as Penang Road, the

Esplanade and Little India found small flocks of pigeons waiting to be fed.

Near a food stall in Little India, a large flock was pecking at the grains of rice or pieces of bread tossed on the road.

Senior citizen G. Maniam said the pigeons had become a menace in public spaces.

"We don't hate the birds, but pigeon droppings can mess up the city's image as a tourist destination. Their faeces is visible on buildings, roads and even vehicles," said the 73-year-old.

Hotel manager Mohamad Hafiz Mohamad Sholeh, 29, said last year, its management hired a pest control service to install anti-pigeon skewers to prevent the birds from perching on its windows.

"We regularly receive complaints from our guests, some of whom have even cancelled their bookings and gone to other hotels when they saw too many pigeons around," he said.

FOR MORE:
See pages 6 & 9

Stop feeding pigeons to curb diseases, urges expert

GEORGE TOWN: When pigeons flutter about while feeding, people should not be near them to avoid inhaling their feather dust or coming into contact with their faeces, says a wildlife expert.

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) zoologist, primatologist and conservation biologist Dr Nadine Ruppert said pigeons could harbour *E. coli* and salmonella bacteria, some of which could pose serious health risks.

"The public should also pigeon-proof their houses and buildings because the accumulation of their faeces will become exponential once a flock of pigeons starts nesting there," she said.

The senior lecturer said pigeons could also be reservoirs of zoonotic (animal-transmitted) diseases caused by viruses, endoparasites and ectoparasites, fungi and protozoa.

She said bacteria and fungi in their faeces could get airborne when the faeces dried up and became dust, and people would inhale these particles.

"Disease transmissions from pigeons might not be common but immuno-compromised patients, children and the elderly will face more risk than others," she added.

Dr Nadine said among the health issues that could be caused by the birds were tuberculosis, bird flu, Lyme disease and others such as ornithosis, campylobacteriosis, histoplasmosis and cryptococcosis.

She also urged the public to never feed pigeons or any other wildlife, noting that this could cause immense problems for both animals and humans.

"People are not aware that they cause severe harm to the animals, such as harmful dietary habits, overcrowding, which could then lead to aggression, stress, elevated disease transmission and consequently, culling by the authorities."

"Even stray or feral cats and dogs should only be fed under controlled conditions and with a combined neutering approach so that they don't breed in the streets," she said.

Dr Nadine added that local authorities should consider imposing heavy fines against feeding wildlife.

She said simply culling wildlife like pigeons, crows and monkeys without addressing the underlying problem was however not a solution.

"There is no effort to educate or penalise the people causing this problem."

"It's often the animals which end up paying the price with their lives for our misguided 'compassion'," she said.

USM virology scientist Dr Muhammad Amir Yunus said diseases commonly transmitted by pigeons were skin-related, owing to fungal spores growing in their faeces.

"People are encouraged to wear masks when they are close to the birds and to wear gloves if they want to touch them," he added.

MBPJ steps up fight against feathered foes

By KHOO GEK SAN
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PETALING JAYA: The Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) is taking steps to address the surge in the pigeon population, including a campaign to raise public awareness.

The MBPJ's initial focus is on educating the public through various channels, including mass media, banners, and educational notices.

However, this initiative is still in its early stages and faces resistance from pigeon feeders.

When contacted, MBPJ said one of the main reasons for the rapid increase in the bird population is animal lovers feeding pigeons.

While there have been no reported cases of diseases caused by pigeons here, MBPJ emphasised the importance of proactive measures in handling public healthcare, highlighting that "prevention is better than cure".

To curb the pigeon population, MBPJ plans to enforce existing legal provisions and continue health education initiatives to discourage the public from feeding pigeons.

It said it has received numerous complaints about pigeons.

These include properties, clothes and vehicles being soiled by their excrement and feathers.

In addition, residents have reported issues such as pigeons perching on their homes, creating unhygienic, odorous and noisy conditions.

Last year, MBPJ received 14 complaints from the public regarding the nuisance caused by pigeons.

As a result, the city council has warned those feeding pigeons in the city to stop doing so or risk

being penalised.

According to Deputy Mayor Aznan Hassan, people caught feeding pigeons or other wild birds had been given verbal warnings and notified to stop.

"They may also be fined RM250. We have been placing banners and making announcements online to educate the public," he said.

Meanwhile, MBPJ has also addressed complaints related to crows by reducing its population via annual crow-shooting campaigns and installing traps, among others.

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 6
RUANGAN : NATION

We need to be all-in to stave off pesky pests

By FAZLEENA AZIZ
and KHOO GEK SAN
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PETALING JAYA: There needs to be a collaborative effort between businesses, the public and local authorities to resolve issues with rats, pigeons and crows, say stakeholders.

Malaysian Indian Restaurant Owners Association vice-president C. Krishnan said part of the problem, especially with rats, was due to the drainage system.

"The drainage system must be well-maintained. We can call pest control or acquire services to catch the rats, but there is only so much we can do on our end."

He added that there were "external elements" beyond their control like ro-ro-bins that attracted rats, crows and pigeons.

He said he had also observed some people feeding pigeons or stray animals out of kindness, but this would cause another problem.

Restaurant owners, Krishnan said, were responsible for the cleanliness of their premises but due consideration from the public as well as local authorities was needed in efforts to solve the pest crisis.

Malaysia Budget and Business Hotel Association president Dr Sri Ganesh Michiel said he had not received complaints from mem-

bers about bird droppings affecting hotel hygiene.

However, he said there had been occasional grumbings from hotel guests about their parked vehicles being covered in bird droppings.

"As hotel operators, we hope local governments and city councils will pay attention."

"If pigeon droppings pose health risks, the Health Ministry, in collaboration with local governments, should promote the prohibition of bird-feeding among the public," he added.

He said some tourist attractions in Kuala Lumpur have become less appealing due to the large presence of pigeons.

Public health expert Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar said that droppings from crows, pigeons and rats were acidic.

This could erode metal structures such as gutters, bricks and vehicles.

"When it comes to rats, they are carriers of organisms that can cause food-borne diseases such as leptospirosis and salmonella."

Birds could also be carriers of certain diseases like psittacosis and histoplasmosis, he added.

To a question, Dr Zainal Ariffin said control measures were a must, especially integrated pest control by local authorities.

He added that the public should also play their role by stopping the

practice of indiscriminately discarding food waste, among others.

"There needs to be a concerted effort to have a clean environment, especially near homes and most importantly, food premises," he said.

"So, there must be community-level efforts, then only the local authorities can follow suit."

Last month, the Hulu Selangor Municipal Council shot 2,449 crows via a programme conducted by the Solid Waste Management and Public Cleansing Department.

The operation was carried out around Bukit Beruntung, Bukit Sentosa, Batang Kali, Serendah, Rasa and Kuala Kubu Baru.

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 9
RUANGAN : NATION

A plague of pigeons scaring away food stall customers

By YEE XIANG YUN
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JOHOR BARU: Sara Md Nordin used to stop by her favourite stall near her house in Skudai for some snacks after picking her kids up from tuition.

However, that changed after the mother of two started noticing bird droppings on the ground at the makeshift stall.

"I used to buy fritters from the stall as I wanted to support small businesses that have suffered during the Covid-19 pandemic, but I stopped going there last October because of its unhygienic surroundings.

"I avoided it because I was worried about the food getting contaminated by the dried bird droppings on the ground," said the 38-year-old housewife when interviewed.

Online seller Christina Lim, 35, said she also felt uncomfortable whenever she saw flocks of pigeons in areas such as Jalan Pasar in the Johor Baru city centre.

According to the Johor Baru City Council (MBJB), 19,143 crows were shot in the city area while 784 pigeons were caught using nets last year.

It said police permits must be obtained before it can carry out crow-shooting as it involves public safety.

Johor Baru Small Business Association chairman Tey Tian Hwang said areas such as Taman Pelangi and Taman Sri Tebrau used to be affected by the presence of crows a few years ago.

"Those are highly populated areas and crows love feeding on rubbish and food waste, which became a problem for residents and businesses.

"Luckily, MBJB took action by regularly shooting the crows and it helped to solve the issue.

"The association has not been getting any complaints lately," he said.

Tey said the association frequently reminds its members – especially those in the food and beverage industry – to prioritise hygiene by keeping their premises clean and disposing of food waste properly to avoid pest infestation.

"Since Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi introduced the state's campaign, 'Johor Bersih', there have been improvements in our members' attitude towards cleanliness," he said.

When contacted, MBJB Stulang zone councillor Bong Seng Heng said although he has not received any public complaints about the birds, he would bring the matter up with the council in their next meeting.

He said the public can lodge a complaint to MBJB via the public complaints management system at <https://mbjb.spab.gov.my/>

Klang crows more a nuisance than a health hazard

By WANI MUTHIAH
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KLANG: The city here is known for its crows and these birds have now invaded other parts of Selangor.

Over the years, cities that have a thriving population of the birds such as Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam and Klang have carried out crow-shooting exercises but failed to bring down the number.

In Klang, the crow population is not only known for its cawing cacophony throughout the day, it is also notorious for vandalising garbage bins and stealing objects such as hangers.

Jean Sivakumar, 46, who lives in Taman Gembira here, said she has to constantly replenish the hangers used for drying clothes as the crows have taken a liking to them.

"Not a day goes by without the crows swooping into my car porch and flying away with a hanger," she said.

Ramli Ahmad, who runs a sundry shop in Kampung Jawa, said he noticed that the birds became fewer after the residents started to make sure their garbage was properly disposed of.

"But you can still see crows coming and sitting on parked cars in the area," he added.

Klang Municipal Council's Health Department director Azmi Muji said the council received nine bird nuisance complaints from the public last year.

"Although there have been complaints, the problems created by birds such as crows and pigeons in the district are not that critical," he said.

He added that there had been no reports regarding health issues related to birds so far.

"Nevertheless, the council will still take all complaints seriously and ensure that we do the necessary.

"Like in 2023, it had organised several exercises to trap pigeons and shoot crows," he said, adding that the council had managed to cull 5,291 crows with the help of the police and licensed



Daredevil birds: Pigeons swarming a popular shopping area in the Klang Valley. — AINA AMIRAH/The Star

firearm owners.

Most of the birds in this city are believed to be the descendants of about 50 crows, which were brought to Carey Island from Sri Lanka in the early 1900s by a British planter to keep rodents away from coffee plants.

According to Prof Dr Rosli Ramli from Universiti Malaya's Institute of Biological Sciences, there is no real danger of people contracting bacterial or viral infections from crows if there is no direct contact.

He added that the problem mainly revolves around the nuisance the birds created by foraging garbage and excreting on cars parked under trees.

"So, there is a need to control their food sources by having a proper and secure garbage disposal system.

"There is a high population of crows in Klang and places near the district because there are many food sources for the birds," he pointed out.

Rosli, who has conducted exten-

sive research on crows, said another reason for the high population of crows in these places is the choice of trees used by the local councils for landscaping.

"We carried out a research in Bangsar and found that crows like to perch on angsa trees.

"If you go to places like Klang, you'll see that these trees are widely used for landscaping in the area.

"So, cutting off their food supply and removing their favourite tree will also prevent crows from breeding indiscriminately," he said.

Rosli also said it is impossible to eradicate the crows.

The birds have a high degree of intelligence, he said while narrating how Japanese scientists had observed that the species placed hard-skinned nuts on the street for cars to run over them.

"The scientists also observed that the crows would only place the nuts on the streets near traffic lights and pick the flesh after the

light turns red and traffic comes to a standstill to prevent themselves from being killed (by the moving vehicles)," he added.

Former Zoo Negara deputy director Dr S. Vellayan said one needs to worry only if crows have settled down in a single location and their collective faeces create mounds.

"If people happen to inhale whatever that is emitted from this mound of crow faeces, then there is a possibility of disease such as lung infection," he said.

He reckoned that as long as the crows are free flying and not settled in one permanent location, they do not pose any health hazards.

Dr Vellayan said since crows are scavengers that feed on carcasses and decayed food, he believed their flesh is not desirable to other animals.

He remembered that some two decades ago, Zoo Negara staff tried feeding the crocodiles with crow carcasses but the reptiles refused to eat them.