



TRAFFIC MATTERS

● There is a long-term three-lane closure along Jalan Raya Satu until Oct 18. The 700m closure is to facilitate preparation for the piloting and relocating of underground utilities, and construction of MRT piers in Jalan Raya Satu. During this closure, three lanes will be made available to motorists.

● There will be a continuation of a partial lane closure in Jalan Cheras heading towards the Middle Ring Road 2 (MRR2) from Kajang near the Taman Billion roundabout until Sept 17. It will be closed for a stretch of 120m. As an alternative to access Jalan Cheras (Kuala Lumpur-bound), motorists from Kajang are advised to use the Taman Billion roundabout to get on to the MRR2. For details, call 1-800-82-6968, visit www.mymrt.com.my, www.mymrt-underground.com.my, Twitter @MRTMalaysia or @MymrtUnderground and MRTMalaysia on Facebook

PROPERTY FAIR

Your dream home awaits you! Start your home searching journey and win great prizes! Visit Sunway Velocity Mall at Ground Floor between Sept 7 and 10 from 10am to 10pm. Free home worth more than RM550K are to be given away. (Subject to T & C). For details, visit fair.starproperty.my

SHAH ALAM ON WHEELS

The Shah Alam on Wheels mobile kiosk will be operational at the parking lot of Giant Hypermarket, Seksyen 18, Shah Alam on Sept 9, from 11am to 5pm. The public can pay their assessment tax, purchase parking coupons and utilise other services. For details, call 03-5522 2734.

CAR FREE DAY

Shah Alam Car Free Day will take place on Sept 10 at Dataran Kemerdekaan Shah Alam. The following roads will be closed during the course of the event from 6.30am to 9.30am: Persiaran Bandaraya (Dataran Kemerdekaan), Persiaran Perbandaran, Persiaran Tasik, Persiaran Masjid, Persiaran Dato' Menteri and Persiaran Damai. For details, call 03-5522 2734.

HEALTH TALK

Learn the secrets to health and happiness including a powerful breathing technique called sudarshan kriya at a free workshop on Sept 10 from 6pm to 7pm. It will be held at the Indian Cultural Centre, 17th Floor, Menara Sentral Vista, 146, Jalan Tun Sambanthan 4, Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur. For details, call 010-421 8788, 011-2407 5213 or 017-310 1664.

DRAFT INSPECTION

The public can inspect the draft of the Kwasa Damansara Petaling Jaya Special Area Plan until Sept 28, between 8.30am and 5pm at Ground Floor, Petaling Jaya City Council, Jalan Yong Shook Lin, Petaling Jaya. Any objections regarding the draft can be made on or before Sept 28 via mail to: Datuk Bandar, Majlis Bandaraya Petaling Jaya, Jalan Yong Shook Lin, Petaling Jaya

FIRST AID AWARENESS

Prudence Foundation will be launching its Safe Steps First Aid programme on Sept 9 at Piazza eCurve, Mutiara Damansara, Petaling Jaya from 10am until 9pm. There will be activities centred on first aid awareness including first aid demonstration, educational activities, talks and games. Admission is free. For details, visit safesteps.com

FREE AMBULANCE

Manipal Hospital Klang is offering free ambulance service for seven days today to Sept 6 as part of its community service in conjunction with National Day. The ambulance service is to any hospital of choice within Klang Valley. Call 03-3884 2222 for the free service.



Illegal advertisements pasted on the pillars of the LRT Bandar Puteri station along Jalan Puchong.

By ELAN PERUMAL and STUART MICHAEL
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No clear solution to unsightly mess

Local authorities find it tough dealing with illegal advertisements put up by loan sharks on pillars

LOCAL authorities are fighting a losing battle with illegal advertisements put up by loan sharks (Ah Long).

As soon as the unsightly posters are removed by enforcement personnel, they are plastered on again, sometimes on the same day.

Their current favourite spots are light rail transit (LRT) and mass rapid transit (MRT) pillars.

Other popular spots include lamp posts, traffic lights, road signs, information boards, public phone booths and walls of buildings.

Ah Long stickers are widely seen at LRT pillars in Subang Jaya, Puchong, Petaling Jaya, Bandar Kinrara, Kelana Jaya and Kota Damansara, especially around the Bandar Puteri Puchong and Bandar Kinrara stations.

MRT pillars at Persiaran Surian in Kota Damansara have also been turned into free advertising space by the loan sharks.

Besides being a distraction to motorists, the indiscriminately placed stickers are unsightly and difficult to remove.

Petaling Jaya mayor Datuk Mohd Azizi Mohd Zain said it was common for enforcement personnel to see stickers back at the same spot by nightfall after they removed them earlier.

He said 61,044 illegal posters, banners and bunting have been removed from various parts of the city from Jan 1 to July 31 this year. "Most of the illegal advertisements were by loan sharks," said Mohd Azizi.

He added that the council sought the assistance of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission to bar the phone numbers listed in such advertisements.

However, he said, the Ah Long are just as adept at getting new handphone numbers.

"I was informed that these mobile numbers are used to screen the callers and the genuine prospects will be contacted from a different line.

"We have also caught individuals putting up stickers and have fined them. But they are just the 'small fish' hired to paste the stickers," said Mohd Azizi, adding



More examples of Ah Long stickers on the pillars of the Kinrara BK5 LRT station along the Bukit Jalil highway.

that legislation was needed to put a stop to Ah Long activities.

It is the same story for areas under the Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ).

The council's deputy corporate communications director Azizfarzal Abdul Rashid said although the MRT and LRT pillars were under the jurisdiction of Prasarana Malaysia Bhd, MPSJ's enforcement personnel would still remove the illegal advertisements.

"There are fewer Ah Long stickers on road signs within our jurisdiction as our contractors have been doing a good job in

removing them," he said.

StarMetro made random calls to some of the contact numbers and were shocked to find that some of the loan sharks are licensed money lenders violating their licensing conditions by charging exorbitant interest.

Although licensed moneylenders are only allowed to charge 2% interest, they were charging between 10% and 25% monthly.

Their *modus operandi* is to add an additional 10% to 15% on the amount borrowed as an administration fee.

The amount will be deducted up

front from the principal before the rest of the cash is handed over to the borrower.

For example, for a RM5,000 loan, they will only give RM4,500, after deducting 10% or RM500 as administration fee.

However, the borrower will be required to sign documents stating that he has borrowed RM10,000.

The loan sharks claim this is a form of insurance to protect themselves from being cheated by the borrower.

"If you run away than I can use this document to recover my money with interest," said a runner who wished to be known as John.

Even loan sharks screen the background of the borrower before approving a loan.

John said loans would only be offered to those with a steady job and they must be supported with three months of payslips and a copy of the borrower's identity card.

"Businessmen can obtain loans with collateral such as land or property," he said

Prior to handing over the cash, John said borrowers' ATM cards would be kept by the loan sharks so that the monthly instalments could be withdrawn on the said date without hassle.

He said the borrower's personal identification number would also be obtained by the Ah Long prior to the disbursement of cash.

"He will be allowed to have the card for a few minutes to withdraw any remaining money after we have taken out the monthly instalment.

"This process will continue monthly until he has settled the full amount," said John.