

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

GREETINGS

The new Government is in a hurry to improve livelihood and the nation's economy. Ministers have met up professional organizations and welcome dialogue and advice. BIM was invited for such a meeting by the Works Minister, YB Baru Bian, when a delegation of 18 from member institutions led by president John Chang made the courtesy call and had an interesting dialogue session. The uniqueness of the BIM delegation is the presence of leaders from various professional institutions under one umbrella who were at hand to respond and take questions specific to the sector of the respective profession.



MR JOHN C.P. CHANG
PRESIDENT

BIM financial position was strengthen when we have successfully rented out some of its physical assets after having stayed vacant for a long while which required some repair. Hopefully more could be rented out near future.

Members are reminded that the BIM Education Fund is available for deserving professionals and welcome applications under their respective organization.

Like last year, a half-day Seminar and the BIM Awards will be organized in conjunction with the coming AGM in July. In line with the Government's effort to promote IR4.0, similar theme will be adopted to highlight the importance and increase awareness among professionals. We look forward to having strong support from member organizations for all the three events.

BIM's EVENT

BIM Courtesy Visit The Minister of Works, Yang Berhormat Tuan Baru Bian on 21 February, 2019

The President, Exco and the representatives of the Member Institution of BIM consisting of 18 personnel visited the Minister of Works, Yang Berhormat Tuan Baru Bian (YB) on 21 February 2019 at his office in Wisma Kerja Raya.



In the opening remarks, the President presented the followings:-

- a) There is much expectation from the new PH Government. Although much have been done on policies there are other areas that need urgent attention to ensure the healthy growth of our economy and globally



- b) has been actively contributing to national building and development, and is always supportive of GovernmeBIM as an umbrella body of 22 professional organizations with over 50,000 memberships nt of the day.

BIM's EVENT

- c) BIM can only play a stronger supporting role to the Government if they are engaged and invited to participate in developing strategic plan and policies.
- d) Professional bodies operate and are supportive of rules and regulation, and look forward to provide inputs to ensure relevancy and practicality.
- e) BIM also looks forward to having regular flow of information specially directed to professional bodies on role opportunities and strong working partnership with the Government.
- f) While professional bodies can provide the technical knowhow, many are limited by financial resources to participate in Government projects, and we hope the necessary assistance be given to ensure opportunities are expanded to a wider base against competition from bigger outfits.



BIM's EVENT

g) BIM is always concern with the quality of professional education and also manpower training especially on courses that are relevant to the needs of the nation. We are concern with over production of any particular profession without proper study on manpower requirements.

h) BIM are supportive of proper certification of professionals to foster professionalism and ethical practice code of conduct, and discourage making use of services offered by non-qualified sources.

i) Professional bodies would encourage the use of advanced and sophisticated building and construction technology to increase efficiency and productivity but would need the support of Government with incentives to introduce them, especially with proper regulation and policy

j) In the current world of big data and analytics, we urge the Government to make available and share such information to enable professional bodies to strengthen their capacity and capability to participate in public and private projects.

k) BIM urges the Government to engage more local professionals to participate in its projects unless lacking in local expertise.

l) BIM looks forward to hear from YB the overall progress made so far, especially in relation to the roles of professional not only within your Ministry but in general in the new PH Government.

ABOUT MEMBERS

PAM BUILDING INFORMATION MODELLING (BIM) BOOTCAMP 2019

1. 6 April 2019 – BIM Training Centre, Level 5 @ PAM Centre
2. 27-28 April 2019 – MyBIM Centre, Sunway Putra Mall



BUILDING INFORMATION MODELING

BIM training for Architectural Consultancy Practice

Wondering how the project team collaborate in BIM environment? Can different BIM output communicate with each other? How?
If the above are your doubts, join us for 3-days BIM Bootcamp which focuses on collaboration simulation for project team which involve architectural, structural and MEP. You will be given opportunities to experience first hand simulation of actual project team collaboration and discover the challenges in BIM collaboration.
This simulation is supervised by experienced BIM Managers from the industry itself. With 40 participants from diverse scope of building practice and MyBIM Centre, you will be able to focus, learn and apply the knowledge in your own practice.

Pre-requisite : Participants must possessed architectural/engineering background, at least min. degree holder, experienced in coordination among consultants/design stage coordination

REGISTER NOW :

Limited seats available for 40 participants ONLY!
LAM CPD POINTS HAVE BEEN APPLIED

BOOTCAMP SESSIONS & VENUE::

6 th April 2019	BIM Training Room, Level 5 @ PAM Centre
27 th & 28 th April 2019	MyBIM Centre, Sunway Putra Mall

REGISTRATION FORM :

Name: _____ Membership No. (PAM/LAM/IEM/RISM) : _____
Office No.: _____ H/P No.: _____ E-mail : _____

Early Bird Fees : PAM/IEM/RISM Members : RM 750.00 Non – Members : RM 950.00
(* In order to enjoy Early Bird Rates, full payment of registration fees must be received before 30th March 2019)

Normal Fees: PAM /IEM/RISM Members : RM 950.00 Non – Members : RM 1,150.00

Bootcamp Dates: 6th, 27th & 28th April 2019

This is NOT a certification or accreditation course. Participants will only receive certificate of attendance.

Contact Person : Puan Hafizah Fax : +603 2202 2566 E-mail : hafizah@pam.org.my

Payment Method:
Payment can be made to United Overseas Bank (Malaysia) Bhd. UOB Account No.: 144-300-583-3
Payment by cheque can be made payable to : PUSAT TEKNOLOGI PAM SDN BHD
Please fax or email the bank-in slip with the registration form

Disclaimer - At times, due to unforeseen circumstances the scheduled events may have to be cancelled or re-scheduled for which PAM B...
the registered participants accordingly. In order to avoid causing any inconvenience to members due to any last minute changes, participants to call PAM at +603 2202 2600 for confirmation.

BIM BOOTCAMP PROGRAM

DATE/TIME	DESCRIPTION
6th April, Sat	
8.00am - 8.30am	Registration
8.30am - 9.00am.	Welcome speech and PAM Bootcamp briefing
9.00am - 10.00am.	PAM Bootcamp BEP Discussion
10.00am - 10.15am	Light breakfast
10.15am - 12.30pm.	PAM Bootcamp BEP Agreement
12.30pm - 2.30pm.	Lunch break
2.30pm - 4.30pm.	Grouping and Task Delegation End of Day 1
OUTCOME	- Agreement of Collaboration BEP - Agreement of Common Data Environment (CDE) Platform
27th April, Sat	
8.00am - 8.30am	Registration
8.30am - 10.00am	BIM Manager Briefing on Collaboration
10.00am - 10.15am	Light breakfast
10.15am - 12.30pm	Collaboration Simulation
12.30pm - 2.30pm	Lunch break
2.30pm - 4.30pm	Collaboration Simulation End of Day 2
OUTCOME	- Initial collaboration simulation – Project placement in CDE - Highlight of Arch vs Structural vs MEP issues
28th April, Sun	
8.00am - 8.30am	Registration
8.30am - 10.00am.	BIM manager 2nd Briefing based on Day 1 findings
10.00am - 10.15am	Light breakfast
10.15am - 12.30pm	Collaboration Simulation
12.30pm - 2.30pm	Lunch break
2.30pm - 4.30pm	Wrap-up Session End of Bootcamp
OUTCOME	- Previous day findings and discussions - Summary of Collaboration BEP defined overall

NEWS

LANDSCAPING SHOULD BECOME MALAYSIAN CULTURE: PM

NST, 3 March 2019



Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged Malaysians to keep their surroundings clean and beautiful.

PUTRAJAYA: Malaysians have been urged to keep their surroundings clean and beautiful.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said if this becomes a Malaysian culture, it would turn Malaysia into a beautiful garden country.

Speaking at the launch of the 2019 National Landscape Day, he said emphasis should be given to landscaping efforts to beautify homes, villages and towns.

"Malaysia is gifted with a good climate and fertile soil. Anything you plant will flourish well.

Therefore, we should take this opportunity to plant plants, trees and flowers to further beautify our surroundings and the country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said town planning should also be conducted in an orderly manner by taking into account the layout of the same type of buildings and the selection of suitable trees to beautify landscapes and garden.

"There is an impact if a certain area is left open, so that we can plant trees and it is not left just like that.

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"In addition, focus on the beauty of trees that are planted along roads and create places for residents to rest on weekends," he said.

He said Putrajaya was merely an empty plot of land some 20 years ago, but now is home to thousands of trees and plants.

Dr Mahathir said instead of being engaged in graffiti art, landscaping should be encouraged in town areas.

"The graffiti drawings on buildings which have no meaning is very ugly to see. Some of the words and phrases have no meaning.

"If there is a meaning, then it's okay. I have nothing against my picture which is drawn on a building in Alor Setar. That's okay," he said tongue in cheek.

At the event, which was also attended by Federal Territories Minister Khalid Abdul Samad, Dr Mahathir handed out several awards in the form of grants to communities, developers and local authorities which successfully planned and implemented comprehensive landscape managements.

Kuala Lumpur City Hall received the grand award of RM1 million grant under the national park initiative.

Putrajaya Corporation and Iskandar Puteri each walked away with a grant worth RM500,000 and RM300,000 respectively.

The National Landscape Day was initiated in 1998 every March 3 aimed at mobilising a culture of love for landscaping among the people in line with Core 1 of the National Landscape Policy, namely, to popularise love for landscaping.

Held for the first time here, the celebration was over three days from Friday with the theme "The Most Beautiful Garden Nation, Malaysia".

Twelve interesting activities were held to attract visitors including aerobic exercise, exploring the botany garden, flower-arranging contest, people's games, botany talk and drawing contests for primary school children.

NEWS

TALK TO US ON OSHA AMENDMENTS, URGES PAM

EdgeProp, 4 March 2019

PETALING JAYA (March 4): The Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM) wants the government to engage with the institution and other relevant stakeholders regarding the proposed amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1994 (OSHA) before it is tabled in Parliament this month.

In a press statement yesterday, PAM president Ezumi Harzani Ismail said the institution applauds the Department of Occupational Safety and Health's (DOSH) efforts to improve construction site occupational safety and health practices but proper engagement with architects, engineers, builders and developers should be conducted prior to introducing the new laws in order to take the views of stakeholders and particularly of the impacted parties into account before they are implemented.

***Site owners and architects to be held responsible for accidents when Occupational Health and Safety Act is amended soon.**

"[DOSH director general] Omar Mat Piah in his statement said that the new amendment to OSHA is expected to be tabled in the Parliament this month. PAM as a professional institute for Architects,



(Ezumi: It is inappropriate to put the blame on any construction mishap, such as site accidents, on the architect without proper consideration on the root cause of the accident. This will not be acceptable by the industry.

requests government law makers to engage PAM and other relevant stakeholders, in order to get our feedback before it goes to the Parliament," he said.

He added that the statements made by Omar on the proposed amendments to OSHA so that construction site owners and architects may be held responsible for incidents at construction sites have raised concerns among PAM members.

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“As the lead consultant in building construction, architects carry the main responsibility as the principal submitting person (PSP) and shall be responsible for the design. It is inappropriate to put the blame on any construction mishap, such as site accidents, on the architect without proper consideration on the root cause of the accident. This will not be acceptable by the industry,” he said.

He noted that Lembaga Arkitek Malaysia (LAM) as the governing body for the architectural profession in Malaysia, has the authority under the Architects Act 1967 to regulate and take necessary action against any architect who commits an offence under the Act.

“Any misconduct or complaint lodged against its member will be investigated by LAM’s Disciplinary Committee. Any architect found guilty for such offence can be fined up to RM 100,000 or up to three years suspension of registration or deregistration from the Board of Architects,” he said.

NEWS

WOMEN OUTNUMBER MEN IN FIELDS SUCH AS MEDICINE, DENTISTRY, LAW AND ACCOUNTANCY

The Star, 8 March 2019



PETALING JAYA: Dentists, lawyers, accountants and doctors – women in Malaysia have outnumbered men in these top professions.

However, the fairer sex still trails behind when it comes to holding decision-making posts in top public listed companies (PLCs).

“Among the top 100 PLCs in Malaysia, women appointed to the board of directors

make up 24.4% in 2018,” the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry told *The Star*.

Nevertheless, it is an increase from 19.27% in 2017 and closer to Malaysia’s 30% target by 2020.

This is based on data from the Department of Statistics Malaysia between 2016 and 2017.

“While achieving the 30% target for women in the top 100 PLCs looks promising, efforts must be intensified to have such results in other companies.

“We believe that gender diversity increases corporate governance and financial performance. The ministry urges companies to reflect and take a stronger stand in enabling this,” the ministry said.

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Industries most severely lacking in women are water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (0.2%), mining and quarry (0.3%), arts, entertainment and recreation (0.6%) and real estate (0.6%).

The ministry said for every 107 men in Malaysia, there are 100 women, as of July 2018.

“This means 48.18% of our population are females. As such, the ministry believes that such equal ratio should also be reflected in all areas and levels of work positions,” it said.

In conjunction with International Women’s Day (IWD) today, the ministry hopes to empower women and eliminate gender discrimination.

“With this year’s theme being Balance for Better, all parties should appreciate the roles that women play and consider how everyone can help women balance their roles for the better,” the ministry said.

Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO) advocacy and communications officer Tan Heang-Lee said gender inequality still persists despite progress in areas like education.

“Women make up only 14% of Members of Parliament and 19% of Cabinet ministers,” she said, adding WAO and the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) were calling for a Gender Equality Act.

“The Act will protect women from gender discrimination and require the government to accelerate the fulfilment of gender equality,” Tan said.

This includes having a supportive work environment like maternity benefits, parental leave, flexible working arrangements, job-sharing and part-time work.

Tomorrow, a Women’s March will be held to mark IWD in Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu.

Organised by a group of NGOs and individuals called Gerakan Pembebasan Wanita, the event aims to end violence based on gender and sexual orientation and ban child marriage, among others.

NEWS

KEEPING TRACK OF TOXIC WASTE

The Star, 28 March 2019



THE toxic waste pollution incident at Pasir Gudang, Johor is unfortunate because while we are, as a country, already on the verge of becoming a fully developed nation, we still have such irresponsible practices of indiscriminate disposal of hazardous wastes.

How can we prevent such incidents from happening again? How can we put a stop to such despicable acts by unscrupulous people?

According to media reports, the incident at Pasir Gudang is not an isolated case as many other rivers throughout the country have been polluted by toxic chemicals from rubbish dumps and landfills. The reality is we do not look after our rubbish dumps well enough. Most are not designed as proper landfills. They are supposed to be sanitary landfills where gases and leachates are properly collected and treated before they are released into the environment.

Landfills would normally generate biogas as a result of microbial action and leach out polluted water. In a poorly designed landfill, otherwise also known as rubbish dump, the gases which are mainly made up of methane would contaminate the air and produce foul smells. At the same time, the polluted water would be leached into the ground, contaminating it with all kinds of toxic muck. It gets worse if hazardous wastes are also dumped at the site.

The necessary laws and regulations have been enacted to manage such hazardous wastes, which are also referred to as scheduled wastes. The Department of Environment (DOE) has been empowered to enforce such laws. For example, all

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scheduled wastes are supposed to be sent to a special treatment facility in Negri Sembilan which is designed to handle and treat them. There is a cost involved, and that is why many unscrupulous owners of companies choose not to send their hazardous wastes to the facility. They don't care about the costs to the country and the people when such wastes are disposed in dump sites that are not designed to treat scheduled wastes.

As we enter an era of depleting natural resources and sophisticated manufacturing, there is an inevitable increase in the use of new chemicals, mostly the synthetic forms. Most are hazardous to human health and the environment and therefore require careful handling not only when using them but also when disposing of the by-products.

Unfortunately, as a nation we are generally still behind in terms of dealing with wastes. Look at the rampant practice of throwing away plastic bags without due care for the potential environmental consequences. I am afraid this is not just a disease of the less educated. Many highly-educated Malaysians are also known to throw their rubbish indiscriminately. Cases of rubbish being thrown out of the windows of expensive luxury cars are not uncommon.

"Of course, it gets more dangerous when the rubbish is the hazardous kind.

It is not easy to change the habits of people. It may take a generation if we start imbibing such culture among the young. The other option is to use technology. We need to keep track of all hazardous materials in industries. These include hazardous materials used in the manufacturing sector as well as the toxic wastes that need to be disposed.

Nowadays, there is a growing recognition of blockchain technology as a way to reduce the misreporting and even abusive practices especially in finance and the related sectors.

It is about improving accountability and transparency. The technology is now being evaluated to keep track of the halal industry. There is no reason why blockchain cannot also be deployed to keep track of hazardous materials.

PROFESSOR DATUK DR AHMAD IBRAHIM

Fellow, Asean Academy of Engineering and Technology
UCSI University

NEWS

MALAYSIAN PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY SUPPORTS POLICIES FOR FAIR PRICING AND ACCESS TO MEDICINES

<https://codeblue.galencentre.org/2019/04/04/affordable-medicine-a-human-right-say-groups-backing-price-controls/>

The Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society has recently shared the following press coverage by Code Blue on their social media platform.

“MPS is very concerned with the disparity of medicines between public and private facilities and also between private hospitals, private clinics and community pharmacists,” said Amrahi Buang, President of the Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society

“There is a lack of transparency and itemised billing which is not fair to the consumers. The consumers have the right to know about the price of each medicine dispensed or supplied to them,” he added.

Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society would support price controls for medicines and also proposed a floor price, besides a ceiling price, to prevent undercutting among community pharmacies.

This was following industry players in a town hall to discuss price controls, that his ministry hoped to impose price controls for medicines by this year, but did not specify which mechanism it was considering the Health Minister Dzulkefly Ahmad announcement to the press after meeting pharmaceutical.

Amrahi also highlighted the Health Ministry’s proposed “track and trace” system which may be able to monitor profiteering if any along the pharmaceutical supply chain.

“In this respect, the Ministry of Health will have to work hand in hand with the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumers Affairs. MPS has also proposed to the government to legalise the Good Pharmaceutical Trade Practice (GPTP) guidelines for better compliance,” he said.

The GPTP guidelines under the Malaysian National Medicines Policy, which were released in 2015, aim to harmonise trading practices between pharmaceutical distribution channels to improve fair pricing and access to medicines.

Among others, the guidelines urge suppliers to notify distribution channels and the Health Ministry before revising prices and to provide a wholesale price list to the ministry annually.

“MPS has on many occasions proposed to have an integrated healthcare system,” said Amrahi.

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“The current dichotomous state of the healthcare of public and private has caused a lot of problems to both sides of the divide and medicines pricing issue is just one of many. There is no universal health coverage in Malaysia as defined by the WHO (World Health Organisation).”

According to a Harvard University study titled “Malaysia Health Systems Research Volume I” published in 2016, government procurement of drugs in Malaysia was on average three to four times more expensive than the international reference price (IRP) for the 2010-2014 period. IRP is the median price of a pharmaceutical product purchased by governments in a range of countries that is used as a benchmark.

A 2018 study by researchers from the Health Ministry’s Pharmaceutical Services Division and from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia found that generic medicine had price markups from wholesale to retail of between 31 percent and 402 percent during the 2011-2015 period in the private sector, while price markups for innovative drugs were lower at 24 percent to 86 percent.

They found that drug price markups were typically higher in private hospitals, where treatment is usually borne by insurance companies, than in community pharmacies that charge competitive prices to attract individual customers.

In conclusion, the above article reaffirms MPS’ motto *Berkhidmat untuk Kesihatan Rakyat*, as the society firmly believes any policy changes affecting healthcare should have the public interest as the guiding factor.

FEATURE

REASONS WHY URBAN PLANNING IS IMPORTANT FOR CITIES

planningtank.com

Urban planning is the art of giving shape, design, and structure to cities and towns. It involves various processes like arrangement and designing of buildings, transport systems, public spaces as well as good amenities. Nowadays, it has become a much-needed discipline because cities are getting overpopulated day by day and resources are getting scarce. Because of continuous threats of global warming and environmental catastrophe, it is important to take the measures. That's why urban planning has become significant as it helps in finding the solutions to use the land and infrastructure in the best possible way.

It was started in ancient Rome when the city had a population of less than 1 million. The government has recognized urban planning as the perfect measure to eradicate the problems occurring in various cities. But the question is, "Why urban planning?" "What does exactly it do and why has it become so important?"

What Is Urban Planning?

Urban planning is a new discipline whose need has been arisen due to the rising health issues because of overpopulation, poor sanitation, and pollution. The way the cities were designed earlier, it had become tough for citizens to reside, walk or use public transport. For the first time in the year 2010, over 50% of the world's population was living in cities. At that time, the United Nations predicted that by 2015, there will be 358 cities in the world having more than 1 million population and 27 megacities with more than 10 million people. Much of this will be seen in developing countries. That's why the need for urban planning came into the picture. With this, let's understand why urban planning has become crucial in today's world.



FEATURE

1. **Helps the Cities to Grow**

Due to more work opportunity, better education facility, and many other reasons, the population in the cities of developing countries is increasing more and more. In order to accommodate a large planning. This will be made by keeping certain factors in mind, such as the needs of citizens, appropriate expansion of infrastructure, and efficient measures during emergency situations.

Utilizing the resources through urban planning, the city would have a strategy to develop its economy as well as livability conditions. Not only the expansion of residential areas, but urban planning also ensures population, there have to be some early plans. That's why authorities should always make proper road transportation, health care, and judicial system. Thus, the city will grow rapidly without having negative impacts on its economy and citizens.

2. **Improves Quality of Life**

Quality of life is the major concern of every human being when they move to a city. The other two issues are employment and accommodation. Though the cost of living is higher, the opportunities are also great. To make it easier, the city manager must have rules and regulations for the proper distribution of land, public spaces, and the infrastructures. Due to increasing density in nearby cities, city management is creating several attractive points of interest in the city. The authorities are also regularly updating the traffic regulations due to constantly increase in the number of vehicles. All these measures are ultimately improving the quality of life of the people.

3. **Predict Disasters**

Global warming has created some major issues for our planet and the inhabitants. Having an early idea of natural calamities has become very important for those who do city management. They are trying to have the prediction of all such calamities to make long-term strategies and later achieve them by making short-term actions. They keep the citizens as well as the visitors safe from all possible disasters that the world is facing today. Minimizing the risks for the betterment of everyone has only become possible because of urban planning.

4. **Positive Impact on Economy**

We all know that as the cities grow, economic requirements increase too. The financial measure is one of the most important aspects of urban planning and if not taken properly, there would be a severe impact on the economy of the city. It takes care of more and more job openings as well as reducing the cost of living. The major problem cities are facing nowadays is the migration of inhabitants due to the reduced number of work opportunities and expensive living conditions. Urban planning also does the expansion of neighboring rural areas. It takes all the required measures for further development and utilization of the rural areas to bring economic growth to the city.

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5. Safe and Healthy Lifestyle for Everyone

By constantly following the advice provided by the World Health Organization, urban planners ensure that the citizens live a safe and healthy life. They suggest the inhabitants pay attention to their lifestyle. Authorities create a better environment and provide sufficient areas in the public park for senior citizens to exercise and have leisure time. They keep machines to collect garbage and unwanted materials to keep the city clean and healthy for the citizens.

6. Develop the Nation

According to the reports of the UN, the world will be likely to have more 3 billion population moving to cities by 2050. This report suggests that this continuous growth in urban population could cause severe harm to biodiversity. Each country is putting efforts to minimize the impact of increasing urbanization on the environment. The management is planting more and more trees. They are raising awareness among the citizens to use more and more public transport and decrease the rate of fuel consumption per person. With all these measures, who will grow? Of course, **THE NATION**

With the growing population, cities will always need urban planning. That's why it must be implemented all around the world, especially in developing countries. They will always come across challenging conditions and things will become even worse without urban planning. Not only the official and the management should be responsible, but every citizen should act sensibly towards the betterment of the society, city, and the country.

Summary: Urban planning is not only about planting trees and picking up the garbage, but there are also thousands of aspects that urban planners cover. That's why it has become so important for cities these days.

FEATURE

THIS IS WHY WOMEN ARE AT HIGHER RISK OF KIDNEY DISEASE

The Star, 20 March 2019

Most of us are born with two kidneys that we hope will serve us all our lives.

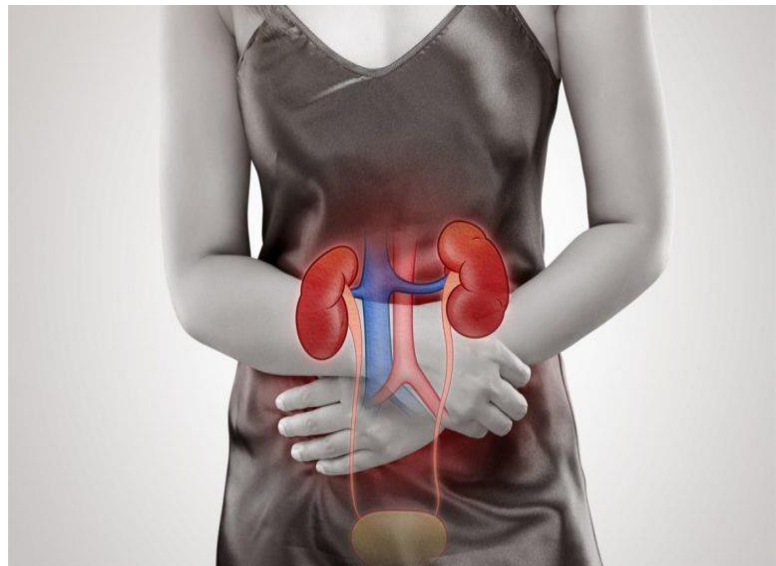
When one kidney is damaged or no longer works, the other one can still cope, but if this “reserve” also malfunctions, then all hell can break loose.

According to the latest 2015 data from World Health Organization (WHO), chronic kidney disease (CKD) affects approximately 10% of the world’s population and is among the top 20 causes of death.

What is more frightening is that the number of patients whose kidneys have failed and are on dialysis has risen in leaps and bounds in Malaysia over the past decade.

The 24th Report of the Malaysian Dialysis and Transplant Registry in 2016 shows that the figures increased from 17,097 in 2007 to 39,711 in 2016.

Says Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia internal medicine clinical lecturer Prof Emeritus Datin Dr Norella Kong: “Before, no one talked about anything other than the first 10 causes of mortality.



Women are more at risk of developing kidney disease, compared to men.

“It is only in the past decade or so that CKD’s impact has grown.

“Dialysis is a major means of treatment, which is very expensive, and once a patient is on it, he or she is being kept alive by a machine for umpteen years.

“This leaves a large economic impact on a country’s resources.”

Kidney or renal function is measured by the glomerular filtration rate and CKD is staged accordingly.

There are five stages of CKD, and the beginning stages (one to three) are often asymptomatic, i.e. do not show any symptoms.

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Even if there are symptoms, these tend to be generic ones like loss of appetite and weight, nausea and vomiting, itchiness, fatigue, and swollen legs, which can be easily mistaken for other conditions.

By the time the patient reaches stages four and five, the objective is to maintain their remaining kidney function for as long as possible, rather than curing the disease, which is possible in the early stages of CKD.

By stage five, patients normally cannot survive without dialysis.

“Even if 1% of patients move on to end stage CKD, it is a big number,” says the retired consultant nephrologist and MAA Medicare Charitable Foundation Board of Trustees member – an NGO that currently cares for about 800 poor and underprivileged kidney patients at 12 charity dialysis centres nationwide.

Having been in the field for over 50 years, she says CKD was initially a problem among the aged, but with greater awareness over the years, it’s now being picked up at a younger age.

Not an ‘elderly’ disease

Primary kidney problems – those diagnosed in the womb and within the first few years of life – used to be fairly fatal a few centuries ago before advances in the medical field.

But now, the number of these kidney disease patients is actually quite low, as abnormalities in kidney function



Prof Emeritus Kong (left) visiting a CKD patients on dialysis at one of the MAA Medicare Charitable Foundation’s centres.

can now be detected early enough to prevent or delay the progression of disease.

Only 3% of end stage CKD are a result of primary kidney disease; the rest are from acquired causes.

“We have health screening programmes at various stages of life in place, so we have the services to pick up any abnormalities.

“At birth, babies are screened and vaccinated against hepatitis B (which can lead to CKD).

“We’ve also got programmes to vaccinate young girls for the human papillomavirus (HPV, which is a cause of cervical, vaginal, vulvar, penile, anal, and head and neck cancers in kidney transplant recipients), though now we’ve discovered that the males need to be vaccinated as well to stop the spread.

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“However, it costs time and money to screen kids for urinary abnormalities, so we only do it when the child is about to enter university or get a scholarship.

“But if you leave school after Form Five or Six, then you are not screened until you get to the employment phase or are obtaining health insurance,” says Prof Emeritus Kong.

Although there are many opportunities for CKD to be picked up, the numbers are still increasing.

“Back then, if there was a small trace of protein in the urine, the medical officers will generally pass you by because they didn’t realise what may happen 20 years down the road in females when they get pregnant.

“These early abnormalities were not acted upon, but now, our guidelines say these individuals require follow up and they are referred to nephrologists (kidney specialists),” says Prof Emeritus Kong.

Sadly, the most common causes of CKD are a result of our modern lifestyle.

Diabetes currently contributes 65% of new dialysis patients with end-stage CKD, while hypertension or high blood pressure amounts to 20% of such cases.

Deaths from dialysis have more than doubled from 1,988 in 2007 to 5,366 in 2016.

New transplant recipient rates have reduced from 113 to 82 during the same period, possibly due to the lack of kidney donors.

At present, the average waiting time for a kidney transplant is also three times longer than 10 years ago.

Although women are more prone to developing kidney problems, there are more men on dialysis as women tend to take care of themselves better. According to Prof Emeritus Kong, CKD patients on dialysis constitute 65% males and 35% females.

She says, “That’s because men have this •tidak apa• attitude or are in denial, whereas females tend to look after themselves better!”

However, females do have unique concerns when it comes to CKD.

Women woes

Prof Emeritus Kong explains, “When females first have sex, they may be exposed to urinary tract infections (UTI) because of our shorter urethra.

“But not all UTIs will move on to CKD as it depends on how far (up the urinary system) the bacteria travels.

“In a small proportion of patients, especially if the tube connecting from the bladder to the kidney is dilated for any reason, allowing the reflux of urine back to the kidney, it will bring infection up to the kidney. That’s when you get pyelonephritis.”

FEATURE

The good news for many women is that pregnancy offers an opportunity for diagnosis of kidney disease through the standard antenatal tests.

The bad news is that pregnancy is also when both acute and chronic kidney disease may exhibit symptoms or signs for the first time.

If a woman has CKD when she gets pregnant, it can have a negative impact on both herself and the baby. The more advanced the mother's CKD, the more risk she and her baby will face.

Pregnancy may also exacerbate previously-undiagnosed conditions in the mother, e.g. diabetes and hypertension, resulting in the development of pre-eclampsia after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Pre-eclampsia is a complication of pregnancy characterised by high blood pressure and signs of damage to another organ system, most often the liver and kidneys, and can occur in women whose blood pressure was previously normal.

Pre-eclampsia increases the probability of hypertension and CKD in later years.

“By the time pre-eclampsia develops in a pregnant woman, it's often too late. We cannot terminate the pregnancy.

“We have to monitor their blood pressure and foetal growth very carefully.

“The blood pressure can spiral out of control and they may have a fit, or even die. Sometimes, even when they get through the crisis, it leaves them brain-damaged.

“In real life, nothing is ideal, so we often encounter these latecomers, and sadly, we lose a few mothers and babies,” says Prof Emeritus Kong.

The other problem with pre-eclampsia is that the blood vessels in the placenta can spasm (resulting in constriction) and the baby may not get proper nutrition.

In these circumstances, the foetus is often small for its age (intrauterine growth retardation or restriction) or born prematurely.

She elaborates, “Pre-term babies have their own complications, even if they survive.

“To compensate for the underdevelopment as a foetus, it guzzles whatever it can and by the time the child is five or six years old, these children are heavier than their peers.”

This continues when they reach their teens as their brain is now wired to think their intake of excessive food is normal and will trigger hunger if they do not eat to this excessive level, which will make them obese.

Specific conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus and sclerosis, which affect the kidney, also afflict women more than men.

FEATURE



A nurse checking on a dialysis machine during treatment.

Prof Emeritus Kong says there is no reason why CKD cannot be detected early, or even cured.

However, most young adults think they are okay as they have no symptoms.

Females embark on pregnancy without pre-checking, especially in rural settings.

“But we tell them, hey, hold your horses! If you embark on a pregnancy unprepared and you have kidney disease, we have to counsel and advise you.

“Sometimes they don’t listen, then don’t come again due to guilt, and only return when complications occur.

“This happens even among relatively educated populations,” she says, sighing.

If the pregnant woman loses her kidney function during pregnancy, she might need to go on dialysis.

She may regain kidney function after delivering her baby, which will allow her to go off dialysis.

However, being on dialysis makes women less fertile.

Prof Emeritus Kong also warns of herbal and traditional medicines, which can cause permanent kidney damage.

“Herbal tea is fine once in a while, but be careful because I’ve seen patients with long term kidney damage resulting from herbal and traditional medicines e.g. *jamu*, which are taken by a lot of women to ‘tighten’ the vagina muscles,” she says.

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