

CROWD CONTROL

'CROSS THE LINE AND RISK CLOSURE'

Local authorities warn bazaars and night markets to ensure S.O.P compliance

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THE presence of huge crowds and snaking queues at Ramadan bazaars and night markets have not gone unnoticed by the authorities, who expressed concern over the potential Covid-19 cases which could arise if safety protocols aren't followed.

Local authorities told the *New Straits Times* that they were aware of the situation and are keeping a close eye on the operations of these bazaars as well as the compliance with standard operating procedures (SOP) among both traders and visitors.

One source within Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) warned traders associations managing the markets that they would not hesitate to close down the market operations if there was any evidence of SOP violations.

"*Pasar malam* (night markets) are managed by traders associ-



People visiting the night market at Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman in Kuala Lumpur recently. FILE PIC

ations. If the organiser cannot control the crowd and ensure that the SOP are followed, we will cancel their permit," said the source.

He was commenting on a viral video of crowds teeming along Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman. The video showed some patrons eating and not wearing masks properly on the fringes of the

area, cordoned off by tape.

A large crowd was also seen gathered on the kerb opposite the Sogo shopping mall.

The source said the authorities would also do the same for the Aidilfitri bazaar on Lorong Tuanku Abdul Rahman, which was organised by DBKL.

Lorong Tuanku Abdul Rahman

Hawkers and Traders' Association president Azkhalim Suradi downplayed the numbers depicted in one of the videos on social media, saying that it only appeared overcrowded from afar.

He said despite the crowds milling around the festive market, the *pasar malam* was not the reason for the packed condition.

This, he said, was instead due to the gating system as well as narrow and dense area outside.

"We rigorously control the entry into the *pasar malam* through the checkpoints.

"If we see that it is crowded, we wait for the crowds to thin and only then allow people into the market. Police are also on site to monitor the situation."

City Hall Licensing and Business Development Department director Khairul Anuar Mohd Juri said that only 800 were allowed within the *pasar malam* at any one time, including a maximum of two people to man each of the 200-odd stalls.

He said DBKL was reliant on the Health Ministry's input on infections and clusters, which are expected to be gleaned from the MySejahtera app.

Meanwhile, the Shah Alam City Council also responded to queries over videos and images of long queues at its Ramadan bazaar at Stadium Melawati Shah Alam last week.

Its Corporate and Public Relations Division head, Shahrin Ahmad, said the SOP for the bazaars had been overhauled since the incident.

"We have barred children under 12 from coming in. There is only one entry and exit point now. Also, those coming in will have to take a number for crowd control purposes."