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KUALA Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) has finally issued trading licences to seven elderly traders operating in Little India, Brickfields, whose stalls were seized in a pre-dawn raid five years ago.

That seizure had kicked off a long-drawn bureaucratic struggle to get back their trading spots of 40 years.

With the licences comes the assurance that the traders will remain at their current spots, as the land which belongs to the Federal Territories Land and Mines Office (PPTGWP) has now been leased to DBKL.

Overjoyed and crying tears of joy, the traders received their licences from DBKL advisory board member Datuk Zainal Abidin Mohd Rafique.

"We are happy and grateful.

"Now that we have finally received our licences, no one can question our right to be here anymore," said Veal Alagi Krishnasamy, 56.

"Five years of living in fear and being harassed by authorities are over.

"I can now sleep at night," added Ooi Ah Boi, 74.

"I am happy, so happy I have no words," echoed Suriagandi Torasamy, 56.

They have been operating from a food court at the corner of the Little India Elephant Fountain.

Zainal Abidin, who is Bukit Bintang Umno division chief, assured traders and told them to rest easy.

**"Now that we have finally received our licences, no one can question our right to be here anymore."**

Veal Alagi Krishnasamy

"PPTGWP has renewed the temporary occupation licence (TOL) to DBKL to operate the food court," Zainal Abidin said.

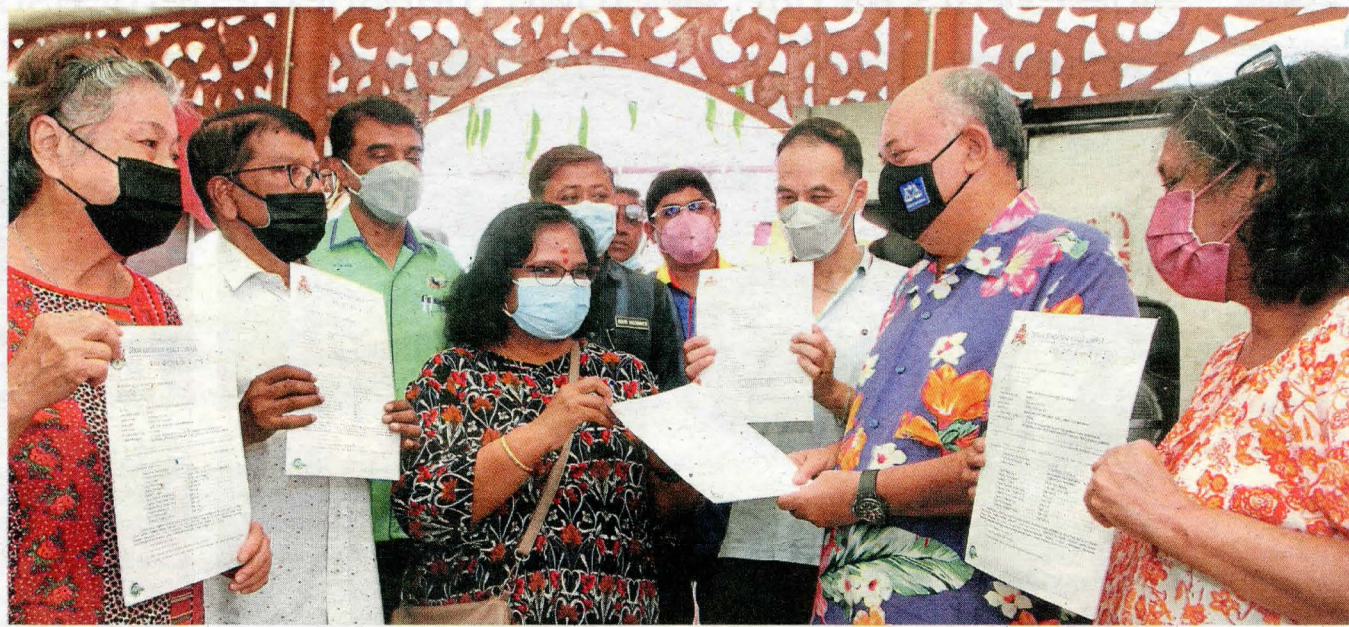
"DBKL can now issue trading licences and there will be no more talk about traders being relocated," he told reporters after handing the licences to the traders.

In 2018, PPTGWP had refused to renew the TOL to DBKL and wanted to take back the land to turn it into a mini garden.

When asked about the observation deck above the food court, which was meant for patrons to enjoy al fresco dining but ended

# Licences finally given to Brickfields' elderly traders

DBKL also assures them that there will be no more talk of relocation



Zainal Abidin (second from right) with the seven traders who received their DBKL trading licences from him. – Photos: MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI/The Star



The traders received eviction notices in December 2018.



The food court and observation deck was built at a cost of RM1mil.

up being leased to a restaurant, Zainal Abidin said he would bring the matter up at the next City Hall advisory board meeting.

"I am not aware of that (observation deck), but I will check on it," he added.

The traders have been operating in Little India since the 1980s.

The site where they were operating was upgraded into a food court with an observation deck

built at cost of RM1mil.

During the construction, the traders were relocated and moved back in Jan 2011 after the project completed.

In Sept 2017, DBKL raided the stalls and operators were told to relocate to the Tun Sambanthan Complex.

A DBKL spokesperson confirmed that they had acted on a letter issued by the then Prime

Minister's Department.

Traders then lodged a report with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

In August 2018, they were allowed to return to the original site to resume business, albeit without a licence requirement.

But in December of the same year, they were told to vacate the premises as DBKL's TOL had expired.

However, the traders were allowed to operate until the movement control order kicked in on March 18, 2020.

The traders received verbal assurance by then Federal Territories Minister Tan Sri Annuar Musa that they could continue to operate without licences but this did little to assure them as the eviction threat was still looming.