

Roadside traders say they provide affordable food options

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ROADSIDE hawkers peddling food and drinks along public walkways, parking spots and near bus stops in Kuala Lumpur say they are providing a service to the community by selling affordable food.

Traders say not only do they earn a living this way, but also give people an alternative affordable food option.

"Everyone knows that our food is much cheaper than what is sold at restaurants," said a trader who only wanted to be known as Pak Ali.

The 52-year-old trader from Bandar Bukit Jalil has been operating his *nasi campur* stall near Apartment Sri Rakyat for a few months now.

According to him, the growing number of people who come to his stall every day showed that people wanted affordable and tasty food.

Another trader, who only wanted to be known as Fatimah, said people appreciated her food because it was home-cooked.

When asked about the conges-



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tion caused by customers who double- and triple-park by the roadside to buy her food, Fatimah said: "I am not causing the traffic jam.

"A lot of my customers will order via WhatsApp and collect the food on their way to school to pick up their children.

"Some even buy the food to take it to their children for lunch in school.

"The public should be more

responsible about where they park and not blame us," she said.

Apartment Sri Rakyat resident Ahmad Firdaus, 25, said the roadside hawkers were convenient for him.

"When I am busy or in a rush, I will buy breakfast at the stalls to take to the office and on my way home, I will buy my dinner.

"It is cheap and easy. No need to think about what to cook.

"Besides, raw food ingredients are expensive now," he said.

Echoing Ahmad's sentiments is Siti Sarah Sulaiman, who lives in Bukit Jalil.

"I expect more food items and fuel prices to go up.

"As such, more roadside hawkers are going to appear and more will rely on them to buy food," she said.

However, there are just as many people who find these traders to be more of a nuisance.

"The number of abandoned stalls on the roadside is increasing each day," said Laman Bayu property manager Jacky Kua.

"From tables and chairs to canopies, it has become an eyesore," he added.

Many traders are operating on a temporary licence issued by Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) under its Wilayah Bebas Berniaga (Free Trade Zone) initiative.

The licence fee of RM20 and operation fee of RM30 a month enables them to keep costs down and sell the food at an affordable price.

However, social issues have

cropped up pertaining to hygiene, obstruction and traffic congestion, including sub-letting of licences to foreigners.

Recently, DBKL and the Federal Territories Ministry gave traders operating under the Free Trade Zone an extension until the end of the year.

DBKL said all the guidelines and standard operating procedure would remain the same.

However, it warned traders that strict enforcement would be carried out if there was an infringement of licensing guidelines.

It said under no circumstances were traders allowed to leave behind permanent structures, canopy and belongings at the trading site.

Those that do so would find their belongings confiscated.

The local authority added that areas which have become a hot-spot for social issues such as nuisance, rubbish and congestion and receive a lot of complaints from the public would be reviewed.

DBKL said it was currently identifying the hotspots and would be relocating the traders.