

Crackdown on unauthorised Ramadhan bazaars in Klang Valley

They are hubs for providing opportunities for vendors to generate some extra income for the upcoming Aidilfitri celebration

by **SHAUQI WAHAB & AKMAR ANNUAR**

RAMADHAN is not only about fasting, prayer and reflection as in Malaysia, it also marks the celebration of community and the sharing of food.

To reflect the latter is the annual Ramadhan bazaar season, where people from all walks of life would flock to various bazaars looking for scrumptious food for iftar.

These bazaars are also hubs for bustling economic activities, providing opportunities for vendors to generate some extra income for the upcoming Aidilfitri celebration.

However, alongside the excitement of these bazaars, municipal authorities face the challenge of regulating and supervising their operations to ensure safety, orderliness and compliance with regulations.

The emergence of unauthorised bazaars during this season brings with it a host of challenges and disruptions to the communities in which they operate.

From cluttered streets to increased traffic congestion, these illicit markets often become a nuisance to their neighbourhoods.

One prime example is located in Danau Kota, Kuala Lumpur (KL), where a narrow junction is claimed to be filled with unauthorised stalls that have caused traffic congestion for occupants and residents nearby, particularly Ashley Poon.

The Malaysian Reserve (TMR) went to Danau Kota Suite Apartment and asked some of the stall operators whether they had permits, and they responded that they were registered with an organiser.

However, when *TMR* requested to see these permits, they insisted *TMR* to refer to the organiser, while pointing in the direction of the crowd.

Poon told *TMR* that she always had trouble entering her residence during Ramadhan due to the existence of the bazaar right next to the entrance.

“Bazaar goers would park their vehicles at any spot they can find without thinking whether another vehicle can pass through,” she complained.

She said last year, the unauthorised organisers also blocked the route into her residence, forcing residents to take a longer detour.

“The organiser would place some blockade preventing traffic from going through the area, although they do not have the authority to do so, while taking into account that they are operating without a proper permit from the local authority,” she commented, adding that the authority would not have approved a bazaar with such a poor traffic flow plan.

Meanwhile, a nearby resident, Mohd Khairi Junos said the bazaar has been there for three years.

“Danau Kota was an uptown marketplace before this condominium was built, and after that, the bazaar just opened at this particular junction,” he told *TMR*.

TMR observed that the influx of vendors and visitors can lead to overcrowding, exacerbating concerns over public safety and hygiene.

While he acknowledged the obstructed pathways caused by the



The Jalan PJS 6/A's straight lot is a registered bazaar under MBPJ

Pics by Shauqi Wahab



The illegal Ramadhan bazaar in Danau Kota

illegal bazaar, Mohd Khairi thought that it had its positive side.

“Yes, I am angry about the traffic jams but for my convenience, of course it is good for me because I can just buy food there when I return from a long day of work,” he said.

However, it is easy to notice that the unregulated nature of these stalls raises significant health concerns, with vendors peddling food items in unhygienic conditions, risking the spread of food-borne illnesses and other health hazards.

Another location is at Jalan PJS 6/A in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. Although the straight lot is a registered bazaar under the Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ), it has become a spot for unregistered stalls to open up shop near the registered ones.

A shop owner who just wants to be called Lamin, said one of the main reasons the unregistered vendors are doing it is because their names did not get listed when they applied for the location.

He also shared that there are many cases where vendors who were awarded the lots did not open their stalls there but instead, rented them out to others whose applications were rejected.

He also said that the vendors are reluctant to register through the

right channel because of the Sales and Service Tax (SST).

“We do not have enough money for it; how are we supposed to roll the profits? Plus, the government does not like it when we increase our prices when the price of raw materials has gone up. We want to live, too,” he added.

Another unregistered bazaar is located on the pedestrian walk in front of NiuZeXui Boulevard, Ara Damansara.

Here, all of the stalls are unregistered and operating during Ramadhan.

A beverage vendor who preferred to be called Kazhar said they have been operating there during Ramadhan for years and they would always get fined by the local authorities.

“We cannot afford to pay for the expensive permits. It is actually cheaper to just pay the fine,” he told *TMR*.

Meanwhile, a local vendor who only wanted to be known as Amy said she opened the stall because it is near many apartments, making it an ideal location to sell her desserts along with other vendors.

“Even if we applied for a permit, it will not get approved because this is a sidewalk,” she noted.

Regarding these unlicensed stalls and bazaars, an MBPJ spokes-



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person told *TMR* that upon receiving reports, the enforcement, licensing and hygiene departments will go to the locations together to investigate and take the appropriate actions.

The Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) has disclosed its approval of 67 locations for Ramadhan bazaars this year.

While DBKL directly supervises two prime locations, including Bazar Aidilfitri Lorong Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Bazar Ramadhan TLK Taman Tasik Permaisuri, the oversight for the remaining 65 locations falls upon event organisers.

DBKL's approval process is meticulous, involving a stringent screening of applicants to ensure compliance with licensing regulations and cleanliness standards.

Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Kamarulzaman Mat Salleh said as the capital city, DBKL is committed to ensuring the smooth operation of bazaars while upholding safety and cleanliness standards.

Successful candidates are selected through a ballot session conducted in late 2023, following an application period from Oct 13 to Nov 1, 2023.

“Our approval process involves thorough screening to select vendors who align with our regulations,” he told *TMR*.

In Sepang, the Sepang Municipal Council (MPSepang), oversees the management of 10 of Ramadhan bazaars directly, with the remaining three by private organisations.

The permit application process is a crucial step in ensuring the smooth operation of these bazaars, in which interested parties are required to apply online through the designated portal, with successful applicants mandated to attend

briefing sessions emphasising hygiene and licensing standards.

Council president Datuk Abd Hamid Hussain said through MPSepang's diligent oversight and collaboration with organisers, it strives to ensure compliance with licensing requirements and hygiene standards.

However, the council maintains a vigilant stance, ready to address any potential violations promptly.

In cases of unauthorised bazaars, thorough assessments are conducted to determine their suitability for approval.

“Our priority is to facilitate a seamless and regulated experience for Ramadhan bazaars in our jurisdiction,” he told *TMR*.

Organisers are then directed to submit formal applications for further review, with enforcement actions looming should non-compliance persist.

“To date, MPSepang has not reported any unauthorised Ramadhan bazaars within its jurisdiction,” Hamid added.

Meanwhile, the Shah Alam City Council (MBSA) is gearing up to oversee the operation of over 1,000 Ramadhan bazaars this year.

The application process for permits under MBSA's jurisdiction also involves collaboration with both the council and private entities.

Additionally, MBSA has introduced an online testing system for permit applicants, aiming to enhance understanding and adherence to licensing requirements and hygiene standards.

While MBSA has not encountered any unauthorised bazaars thus far, it maintains proactive measures to prevent and address potential infringements.

Based on an announcement on Jan 2, 2024, from the Klang Municipal Council (MPK) on the rulings of their 2024 Ramadhan bazaar, 38 approved locations are recorded, totalling up to 2,131 lots.

Interested vendors must attend mandatory briefing sessions to be eligible to apply for permits, with the online application portal open from Jan 15 to Feb 29, 2024.

The application process involved stringent requirements, including adherence to vendor eligibility criteria and directives on food handling practices and waste management.

Additionally, the Council has introduced a “first come, first served” allocation system to streamline the process and maintain fairness.

Illegal bazaars face immediate enforcement actions, such as permit cancellations and confiscation of goods, as part of the council's efforts to uphold orderliness and safety.

However, on single roadside shops that suddenly emerge in many areas, the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council (MPAJ) said it has allowed vendors to apply for the Conditional Placement of Scattered Traders programme, where they can operate their stalls at locations and conditions approved by the council.

A total of 894 Ramadhan bazaar sites under the supervision of MPAJ have been opened.

Approval for these bazaar sites and permits has been granted based on applications submitted by vendors since last year.

As for the Subang Jaya City Council (MBSJ), 25 bazaar locations are listed with a total of 1,560 lots.

The standard enforcement practice for most local authorities towards unregistered stalls is that they would start with a verbal warning, followed by a written warning. If the illegal stall is still operating, the councils have the right to confiscate their equipment.