

Chinatown marred by gridlock

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SHOP owners in Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown are fuming over the growing presence of food stalls operating in the back lanes of their shoplots in Jalan Sultan.

Restaurant operations manager Steve Wong has seen the situation getting worse over the decade.

"It is getting out of hand," Wong said, adding that originally, it was just a few stalls, but they had now expanded to occupy not only the back lanes but also the five-foot way near the busy intersection of Jalan Sultan and Jalan Pudu.

He said as a result the area was congested.

"They leave their stalls right by my back door, blocking the walkway," he said.

"Food waste attracts pests like rats and cockroaches, and at night, they put tables and chairs on the pedestrian walkway."

He said the situation was made worse with the addition of makeshift roofs over the back lanes.

"Vehicles can't get through the



Lai says the backlane structures are illegal.

back lanes anymore," Wong said.

"We have to unload deliveries on the main road of Jalan Sultan. This blocks traffic and adds to the congestion."

Despite complaints to the Housing and Local Government Ministry (KPKT) and Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL), the problem still persists.

He said DBKL carried out a temporary seizure of tables and chairs in July last year and issued summonses to food stall operators, but that did little to deter them.

Shop assistant Michael who preferred anonymity, raised his concerns over fire safety.

"These stalls block the back lane escape route," he said.

"In case of a fire, emergency services will not be able to access the buildings. The authorities need to take stricter action."

This is not an isolated incident.

A recent *StarMetro's* report in January titled "Pasar Karat Shift Still on the Cards" highlighted the removal of a flea market from Jalan Petaling's back lanes for similar reasons.

Kuala Lumpur Advisory Board member Andre Lai confirmed that while the traders had temporary licences, the back lane structures were illegal.

"DBKL has issued notices for the removal of the structures as these violate the Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974," Lai said.

With both public safety and aesthetics at stake, Lai has pledged to work with DBKL to address the issue to restore order to the city's Chinatown.

Lai also plans to investigate the scattering of food stalls near the REX KL beautification project.

The presence of food stalls operating in the back lanes of shoplots in Jalan Sultan is out of control.

