

'Thank you for being considerate'

Disabled community happy with nationwide crackdown on hawkers operating on five-foot way

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THE disabled community in Kuala Lumpur are happy with the government's move to intensify crackdowns on traders operating on pedestrian walkways, five-foot ways, and stairways.

They expressed their gratitude to Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming who explained in Parliament last week of the nationwide crackdown by the local authorities to address the issue.

The Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) chief executive officer Datuk George Thomas said "I am pleased with Nga's commitment to addressing the obstruction of walkways especially the ones with tactile blocks for the blind.

"We hope DBKL (Kuala Lumpur City Hall) will rigorously enforce regulations against

traders who obstruct the pathways of the blind residents, especially in areas like Brickfields."

Selangor Paralympic athlete Hemavati Muniandi, who is a wheelchair user, expressed her gratitude to Nga for listening to the plight of the disabled community.

"As a wheelchair user, I often find it extremely difficult to manoeuvre the wheelchair around the city centre, especially when pedestrian walkways meant for people like me are constantly impeded by traders operating on walkways.

"I am thankful that someone is listening to our issues and is willing to do something about it."

Nga had said in Parliament as of June 30 this year, a total of 879 public complaints had been received and 1,047 enforcement operations had been conducted against traders who unlawfully occupied public walkways, five-

foot ways among other public spaces.

These efforts resulted in the nationwide issuance of 1,720 notices and 7,891 compounds, in addition to 339 seizures.

He reiterated that local authorities were stepping up enforcement activities to curb the misuse of public facilities and councils had increased periodic patrols and monitoring.

Nga said local authority by-laws on licensing stipulated that hawkers were not allowed to trade on public walkways without permission.

"Those doing so without permission can be fined up to RM1,000 under Section 46(1)(d) of the Street, Drainage, and Building Act 1974, which empowers the local council to arrest any person without a warrant for placing an obstruction, such as goods or items, in any public place.

"If convicted, the individual



The presence of stalls on public walkways impedes persons with disabilities from navigating public spaces safely. — Filepic

can be fined RM500 and up to RM1,000 for repeat offences," he had said when responding to questions on the matter by Senator Isaiah Jacob who represents the interest of the disabled.

In June, *StarMetro* ran a series of articles highlighting Kuala Lumpur residents' demands for a ban on roadside traders operating on pedestrian walkways, especially those with tactile blocks for the visually impaired.

When contacted, Isaiah, however expressed dissatisfaction with the government not addressing the issue of local

councils giving traders permission to operate on pedestrian walkways, particularly those with tactile blocks designed to guide the blind.

"By granting licences for these locations, the message is that it's acceptable, which is not the case," Isaiah said, adding that he planned to meet with Nga to find a solution.

Isaiah stressed that hawking on public walkway must not be allowed as councils must prioritise the safety and comfort of pedestrians, the elderly and mothers with strollers and above all, the disabled community.