

Saravanan's visit helps relieve hawkers' fears

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PETALING Street traders fearing City Hall's aggressive action on illegal foreign workers could finally heave a sigh of relief following Deputy Federal Territories Minister Datuk M. Saravanan's visit there on Tuesday.

Saravanan announced last week on the sidelines of the ministry's roundtable forum with KL MPs that City Hall had to take immediate action on foreign workers there following Wangsa Maju MP Wee Choo Keong's allegations.

However, when he visited the tourist destination about 6pm, foreign workers were nowhere in sight, including the supposedly legitimate ones.

With him were Bukit Bintang MP Fong Kui Lun, Kuala Lumpur

Hawkers and Petty Traders Association vice-president Datuk Ang Say Tee and Bukit Bintang MCA division chairman Datuk Dr Lee Chong Meng.

"I came here because an MP who is not from Bukit Bintang said Chinatown had turned into a Bangladeshi town.

"We're very concerned but, so far, it looks all right," he said after visiting all the stalls and the City Hall CCTV control room in the area.

"I didn't see any illegal traders, I don't even know what's illegal here," he added.

He also asked Fong if he had seen any illegal workers, to which Fong answered, "No, not today."

Asked if the foreign workers were not there because they were tipped off, Saravanan said it was possible and that was why the authorities

needed cooperation from the traders and their association.

He urged the traders to notify the DBKL mobile unit stationed at the area whenever they saw anything wrong because City Hall's enforcement officers could not be everywhere.

It is learnt that many traders resort to hiring foreign workers as they fail to find locals.

Saravanan asked them to write to the ministry through the association and their requests would be assessed through discussions with the Tourism Ministry.

He said his ministry had also identified other problems plaguing the traders and would look into them.

The problems included cleanliness, leaking rooftops and a lack of walkways.

He stressed that Petaling Street

was a famous tourist destination and the issues had to be dealt with carefully, adding that the government might be accused of taking revenge on the electorate if they carried out insensitive enforcement.

He said the visit also showed that the ministry was ready to work with "rational" MPs.

Petaling Street has 773 traders, each paying a monthly rental of RM200.

Fong also urged Alam Flora to clean the area more frequently to reflect Kuala Lumpur's status as a world-class city.

He said he would have a meeting with City Hall director-general Datuk Salleh Yusup and the Petty Traders' Development and Management Department to sort out issues in Jalan Masjid India, Jalan Imbi and Petaling Street.