



Pasar Karat will be relocated once the new complex, just a stone's throw away on Lorong Bandar 22, is built. — Filepic

Better site for KL's flea market

Planned three-storey complex a boost for Chinatown traders

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Citycism

THE first time I wrote about Pasar Karat of Lorong Petaling, Chinatown, Kuala Lumpur was for a column called "Nightstalker".

This was in 2015 and the column aimed to feature places to visit at night.

Traders at this flea market, started plying their wares in the wee hours.

They were known to sell second-hand and vintage items which some claimed were stolen.

The questionable source of their goods gave a bad reputation to Lorong Petaling that was often referred to as "lao shu jie", Chinese for "a rat's street".

Over the years, the market gained popularity and traders got temporary licences.

To give the street its own identity, several graffiti works of Pasar Karat were created along Lorong Petaling, making it picturesque for tourists.

The flea market, however, remained frowned upon by local businesses, due to concerns about cleanliness and fire safety.

This year, Pasar Karat was relocated to a vacant lot beside the Lee Lam Thye Wet Market due to safety reasons, as shop owners along Lorong Petaling had complained about the traders' stalls blocking fire escape routes.

While the flea market traders had at first rejoiced over the market's relocation, it has created problems at the

new site.

With about 100 traders now operating on the vacant land, Lee Lam Thye Wet Market traders say their businesses have been affected.

A noodle seller lamented that Pasar Karat traders' stalls often spill over onto Lorong Bandar 20, which is the access road to the market.

"This drives away customers because the traders are everywhere by the roadside."

The culprits are not Pasar Karat traders but others who have come from elsewhere.

In response, Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) conducted operations that reduced the number of traders.

However, local businesses are still critical of Pasar Karat.

Their current trading location is temporary as DBKL is planning to build a three-storey complex to house traders from both Pasar Karat, and the Lee Lam Thye Market.

The complex will be at the site of the old Madras Cinema that burnt down in 1978.

Located along Lorong Bandar 22, it is just a stone's throw from the current market.

The new location aims to provide better operational premises for Lee Lam Thye Market traders who are now taking up the intersection area of Lorong Bandar 22 and Lorong Galeri Lee Lam Thye.

It will also place Pasar Karat traders under one roof instead of having them scattered around the vacant lot and potentially being an eyesore.

Once the market traders have moved to the new premises, the lanes that they used to occupy will be beautified.

KL's Chinatown is worth the investment as it is an iconic must-see for local and international tourists, and has the potential to grow even more as part of Malaysia's vibrant cultural landscape.