

KL City Hall overhauls Ramadhan bazaars

It fully manages the process with a structured, transparent and regulated system to ensure fairness and efficiency

by AUFA MARDHIAH & AKMAR ANNUAR

KUALA Lumpur's Ramadhan bazaars have been a staple of the fasting month for years, providing business opportunities for traders while offering a diverse range of food and festive goods for visitors.

Previously, these bazaars were largely managed by trader associations, which oversaw stall allocations, rental fees and logistical arrangements.

However, 2025 marks a significant shift as Kuala Lumpur City Hall (KL City Hall), in collaboration with Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd, oversees the Ramadhan and Aidilfitri bazaars at 42 locations across KL, running from March 2 to March 30, 2025.

KL City Hall has taken full control of the process, introducing a more structured, transparent and regulated system aimed at ensuring fairness and efficiency.

This move has resulted in several major policy changes, including the removal of trader associations from stall management, the introduction of a lottery system for stall placements, a revised rental pricing structure and stricter licensing and compliance requirements.

As part of its efforts to support traders, KL City Hall has set a flat rental fee of RM500, while Bank Muamalat has provided additional sponsorship, covering the cost of an 8ft x 8ft canopy, two aprons and two caps for each trader.

Additionally, as part of the push toward cashless transactions, Bank Muamalat has introduced the DuitNow QR Soundbox 3-in-1 terminal, allowing traders to process payments digitally and reducing reliance on cash transactions.

The overhaul has received mixed reactions from traders. While many acknowledge that it has brought greater order and transparency to the bazaars, as well as modernised and streamlined operations, it has also introduced new challenges.

Traders have expressed concerns particularly regarding stall placements, daily operations and compliance with stricter regulations.

How Traders Are Adapting to the New System

For traders like Muhammad Farhan Alif, a *roti John* seller in Bangsar, the transition has required significant adjustments.

"This year, we paid RM500 for rental, including a RM200 deposit. Previously, under the association, the arrangements were different and some funds might have gone to the association itself," he told *The Malaysian Reserve* (TMR).

According to KL City Hall's website, the total cost for a stall at this year's Ramadhan bazaar is RM980, covering various components.

Traders are required to pay a RM30 licen-



Stall allocation process was conducted smoothly through the online lottery system, says Mohd Apipi



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Pic by AuFa Mardhiah



Under KL City Hall's new system, traders can now leave their tents on-site

Source: Media Mulia

sing fee, a RM150 service charge, and a RM100 stall rental fee, in addition to a RM500 canopy rental fee, ensuring that each stall is adequately equipped.

Additionally, a RM200 security deposit is required, which is refundable upon compliance with bazaar regulations.

This structured pricing model replaces the previous system, in which costs varied depending on location and trader association agreements.

At the Pantai Dalam Ramadhan bazaar, Nur Ain Nor Rahim highlighted that KL City Hall's direct management has introduced a new operational dynamic for traders.

While traders previously enjoyed a strong rapport with the former management, they are still in the process of building a similar level of understanding with the new KL City Hall team.

She pointed out that the previous management strategically arranged traders to minimise direct competition.

"The former management knew how to position the traders based on what their products.

"If a trader was selling a particular item, they would ensure that another trader selling the same product was placed elsewhere to reduce direct competition," she explained.

However, under KL City Hall's system, she noted that traders are assigned lot numbers with limited flexibility. Nur Ain mentioned instances where traders were placed next to others selling the same products.

Rahmat Affendi, a *murtabak* seller in Kampung Baru who has been operating for 15 years, agreed that the regulations are tighter, but viewed this as a positive change, as it has led to a more organised system.

However, he opined that the lottery system does not consider the type of food traders sell, which could result in unnecessary competition.

Other traders echoed similar opinions, including Mashitah Ahmad, who noted that stall allocations have become more restrictive compared to previous years.

"Previously, we could operate two stalls, but now each trader is limited to only one."

She added that while rental fees remained

the same, the online application process has been slower and more tedious compared to the previous manual system.

Meanwhile, the introduction of the randomised stall allocation system has been one of the most controversial changes.

Unlike the previous system, where trader associations strategically spaced out stalls to minimise competition, stall placements are now assigned through a digital lottery. KL City Hall has confirmed that these allocations are final, with no changes allowed.

Muhammad Farhan expressed concern that he might be placed next to another *roti John* seller, whereas previously, the association ensured similar traders were not positioned adjacent to each other. He hopes that KL City Hall will refine the system in future iterations.

While the lottery system has been met with some resistance, traders like Meor Ahmad Fitri Abu Hassan have welcomed the increased transparency.

He said the lottery process was conducted live on Facebook, so traders could see exactly how things were handled.

"I prefer it this way because it provides more transparency regarding the situation at the bazaar," he said.

Meanwhile, in Taman Tun Dr Ismail (TTDI), trader Muriati Hasan noted that the system has become more stricter due to KL City Hall's concern about foreign workers operating stalls.

"Some traders now have to assist shop owners who manage other businesses, as they do not have time to complete the necessary documents under the new system," she told TMR.

Another trader Mohamad Apipi Norazma, who secured a spot for the first time in three years, commended the significant improvements made to the system, noting that it has become more efficient.

He said the stall allocation process was conducted smoothly through the online lottery system. Regarding rental fees, he said the RM980 charge is quite affordable.

New Operational Efficiencies

Despite the challenges, some of KL City

Hall's new policies have reduced the workload for traders. Previously, stall operators had to dismantle their tents daily and transport them home, a process that was both time-consuming and labour-intensive. Under the new system, traders can now leave their tents on-site.

This change has been well received, as it allows traders to focus more on their businesses without worrying about logistics at the end of each day.

Moreover, beyond providing economic opportunities for local traders, the Ramadhan and Aidilfitri bazaars are also part of the KL City Hall's broader push toward urban sustainability.

In collaboration with the Department of Health and Environment (JKAS), KL City Hall has launched several environmental initiatives aimed at making KL a greener, more sustainable city.

The Zero Waste @ Ramadan Bazaar Campaign aims to reduce food waste and increase recycling practices among traders and visitors. This initiative is part of the Kuala Lumpur Zero Waste 2040 Roadmap, which sets a target of reducing landfill waste by 60%.

To curb food wastage, KL City Hall has introduced the Appreciate Food, Avoid Waste: MySaveFood @ Ramadan Campaign, which collects excess edible food and distributes it to underprivileged groups at 11 selected bazaar locations.

Another initiative, the Used Cooking Oil Recycling Campaign, in partnership with FatHopes Energy Sdn Bhd, encourages traders to recycle used cooking oil, helping to mitigate environmental pollution.

In addition, KL City Hall has implemented the Avoid Single-Use Plastics Campaign, encouraging traders and the public to use biodegradable alternatives. Engagement sessions with traders have also been conducted to raise awareness of the ban on polystyrene.

To ensure that all food sold at the bazaars is safe and of high quality, KL City Hall has introduced the Food Safety and Hygiene Monitoring Campaign, which involves strict oversight by JKAS to maintain hygiene standards.

Game Changer for KL's Seasonal Markets

While the transition to KL City Hall's direct management has not been without challenges, traders acknowledge that it has introduced more structure, fairness and predictability to the bazaars.

With 42 locations hosting the 2025 KL City Hall's Ramadhan Bazaar, the new system is expected to reshape the trading landscape in the coming years.

While some traders remain cautious, others recognise potential benefits in the shift toward a more structured and transparent framework.

"For now, things seem fine under KL City Hall's management, but we will have to see how it plays out in the future," said Muhammad Farhan.

The 2025 Ramadhan bazaar may be a turning point for how seasonal markets are managed in KL, but whether the changes will be widely accepted remains to be seen.