

Hawker whitelist move welcomed

But restaurant owners urge DBKL to ensure mobile traders are fully regulated

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A GROUP of restaurant owners has welcomed the government's latest push to whitelist unlicensed traders in Kuala Lumpur, but says the plan should be implemented thoughtfully and not at the expense of brick-and-mortar restaurants.

Malaysian Indian-Muslim Restaurant Owners Association (Presma) vice-president Abdul Mukthahir M. Ibrahim said the group supported Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories) Datuk Seri Dr Zaliha Mustafa's call for a more structured approach towards roadside traders.

However, he stressed that such traders must be placed in suitable locations, not directly outside licensed restaurants.

"We commend the government's effort to bring order and accountability to the sector," said Abdul Mukthahir.

"Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) must ensure that these stalls and food trucks are relocated to proper zones, away from the doorsteps of established eateries.

"There must be proper cleaning facilities, toilets and grease traps, and they must not be near drains."

He said many mobile vendors



Roadside vendors in unsuitable locations can cause congestion, obstruction and friction. — Filepic

were operating directly in front of licensed premises.

"By placing tables and chairs without permits and occupying public spaces, these vendors are undercutting restaurants that are bound by strict regulations.

"While licensed restaurant operators pay rent, utilities, licensing fees and staff wages, these mobile traders operate with minimal overheads, offering cheaper prices right outside our doors.

"This isn't fair competition,"

he emphasised.

Abdul Mukthahir said DBKL should focus on ensuring proper placement of all roadside businesses, to prevent further congestion, obstruction and friction.

On Thursday, Dr Zaliha said DBKL had been directed to carry out a citywide whitelisting exercise for unlicensed traders, to be completed by August.

The minister stressed that while the initiative aimed to bring unregulated traders into the system, it was not a blanket



Dr Zaliha: Only eligible applicants will be licensed.

amnesty as only eligible applicants would be licensed.

She said the move was intended to correct a flawed system and collect accurate data on roadside stalls, warning that failure to comply would result in stricter enforcement.

Dr Zaliha emphasised that governance must move away from ad hoc decisions and towards rule-based administration.

She questioned the fairness of allowing unlicensed hawkers to operate freely while others had to follow the rules.

She asserted that all businesses in Kuala Lumpur must be properly licensed for there to be justice and order in the city.

Mohd Jawaher Ismail, a restaurant owner, said the government's move to legalise unli-



Abdul Mukthahir supports a structured approach.

censed traders must also address long-standing concerns about unfair competition.

"How can we compete when a food truck sells *roti canai* for RM2, while we have to charge RM2.50 just to break even?"

"If the government is legalising them, then it must also ensure an even playing field for those of us who have been following the rules," he said.

A cafe owner on Jalan Tun HS Lee, who did not want to be named, said legalising stalls was a good move, but stressed that it must come with proper planning.

"You cannot just let them trade anywhere they like.

"Put them in proper places with water and toilet facilities," he said.