Ending KL's alfresco clutter

Roadside stalls will be regulated to ensure pedestrian safety and accessibility along the city's walkways.

>2&3

Diners enjoying a meal on a public walkway in Kuala Lumpur. — Photos: MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI and LOW LAY PHON/The Star

Task force set up to curb illegal alfresco dining

DBKL to identify suitable areas, crack down on errant eateries

The Star EXCLUSIVE

By BAVANI M
bavanim@thestar.con.my

FED up with the disarray on Kuala Lumpur's walkways, mayor Datuk Seri Maimunah Mohd Sharif is spearheading a new task force to draw a line on permitted street dining locations in the city.

She said the task force would identify designated zones across Kuala Lumpur deemed suitable for roadside dining, specifically areas with adequate space and minimal traffic exposure.

Zones considered unsuitable would remain free and clear altogether, she said, as Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) cracks down on the growing encroachment by restaurants and cafes on public spaces.

Maimunah said DBKL would no longer allow tables and chairs to be placed indiscriminately, even by licensed eateries.

"Restaurants can apply for outdoor dining permits because alfresco dining is popular.

"Even for licensed premises, only certain areas qualify and which areas are suitable will be identified soon.

"These rules clearly outline the types of activities allowed, locations and the permitted duration so when permission is granted, it comes with strict conditions."

She added that failure to comply on an operator's part would lead to enforcement action.

"If operators fail to comply, we will begin with a verbal warning.

"Should they continue to breach the rules, a notice will be issued under the relevant by-law.

"If the offence persists, we will confiscate the obstructing items.

"Consistent enforcement is key, and I promise you, we will keep it up," Maimunah told *StarMetro* in an exclusive interview.

She said new approach included the potential whitelisting of certain roadside stalls.

"For example, if an area is flood-prone or a neighbourhood with high pedestrian traffic and accessibility needs such as Brickfields, or a heritage area with heavy footfall like Jalan Sultan or Jalan Petaling, then it may not be suitable for tables and chairs," she said.

"With this new zoning method, we will identify where alfresco dining can take place safely and where it must be strictly prohibited."

Overseeing this process is a special task force that will be established under the DBKL executive director (Socio-economic Development).

"The task force will comprise engineers, city planners and enforcement officers," she said.

Maimunah says each outdoor dining application must meet specific criteria.

DBKL 2024 enforcement on illegal placement of tables and chairs

Parliamentary constituency	Action taken	Type of items		
		Tables	Chairs	Others
1. Bukit Bintang	43	394	442	363
2. Setiawangsa	28	156	159	250
3. Wangsa Maju	27	234	314	174
4. Segambut	25	112	167	321
5. Bandar Tun Razak	24	73	118	118
6. Titiwangsa	18	180	347	42
7. Batu	15	260	228	62
8. Seputeh	15	451	294	84
9. Kepong	14	240	284	79
10. Cheras	13	141	160	46
11. Lembah Pantai	11	73	79	88
TOTAL	**233**	**2,314**	**2,592**	**1,627**

Source: Kuala Lumpur City Hall

The Star graphics

Maimunah said the task force would also have a different function from Keja (*Mesyuarat Jawatankuasa Kelulusan Permit Kerusi Meja),* which approved permits and issued stickers to eateries that are allowed to place tables and chairs in public spaces.

"Unlike Keja, which focuses on guidelines and permit approvals, this task force will identify enforcement zones and resolve overlapping jurisdictions within DBKL.

"There will no longer be instances where the Urban Transport Department says 'no' (to issuing licence) but Licensing Department says 'yes'. We must go out as one team with one voice," she said.

In the past, enforcement officers wanting to take action against errant eateries were often met with resistance, as operators would claim they had special permission or licence, leading to confusion and inconsistent enforcement.

"While Keja handles the approval process, this new task force will focus solely on enforcement, ensuring that eateries do not go beyond the boundaries of their permits."

Maimunah said Brickfields was flagged for immediate review.

This follows recent meeting with Special Select Committee on Social and Community Affairs member Senator Isaiah Jacob and other stakeholders.

"If an application comes in and it involves tactile blocks, the answer is simple – we cannot allow it.

"Tables and chairs will not be permitted there. Accessibility must take precedence."

Maimunah reiterated that only licensed businesses operating as restaurants, cafes or coffeeshops were eligible to apply for outdoor seating permits.

"Unfortunately, despite the existence of clear rules, many operators flout them – some exceed their approved space, while others bypass the process entirely and encroach as they see fit," she said.

She added that clear guidelines were in place for licensed roadside stalls and food trucks, which were not permitted to place tables and chairs in public spaces and only allowed to operate on a takeaway basis.

Yet, even these rules were frequently flouted, said Maimunah.

She revealed that DBKL collected RM117,900 in 2023 and RM118,240 in 2024 in revenue from permits and deposits relating to placement of tables and chairs.

She noted that Bukit Bintang recorded the highest number of applications and encroachments, followed by Seputeh and Kepong.

Last year, DBKL carried out 233 enforcement exercises, seizing 2,314 tables, 2,592 chairs and 1,627 other items.

On the question of penalties, Maimunah said DBKL adopted a tiered approach,.

"For first-time offenders, we typically issue a verbal warning,

"But if they persist, we will issue a violation notice under Section 46 of the Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974, which carries a fine of RM500 per offence.

"For repeat offenders, we will step up enforcement, including the confiscation and removal of any items causing obstruction," she added.

Maimunah also said local stakeholders such as Residents' Associations (RA), Rukun Tetangga (RT) and Residents' Representative Councils could play a vital role in supporting enforcement efforts.

"They can be our eyes and ears on the ground – taking photos and sharing information with our team.

"We also receive valuable feedback from our DBKL branch offices which help us monitor hotspots more effectively," she said.

Maimunah said she had always been an advocate for seamless connectivity and a walkable city.

"Our public spaces must prioritise pedestrians, especially the elderly, children and persons with disabilities.

"We cannot allow walkways to be turned into private dining spaces at the expense of accessibility and safety," she said.

A visually impaired pedestrian finding her way along a tactile path in Brickfields.

Tents and tables line both sides of a walkway in Brickfields, obstructing the tactile path meant for the visually impaired.

A roadside stall along a busy pedestrian corridor in KL Sentral. Under DBKL's ongoing whitelisting exercise, such stalls will be scrutinised for zoning suitability and licensing compliance.

WATCH THE VIDEO
TheStarTV.com