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Small-time traders in Kajang see red over abrupt demolition of shops, demand answers from Selangor



Jerry Choong

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Baharudin Aminuddin speaks during press a conference on Kg Manickam Bangi Lama shops that were demolished in Bangi Old Town, April 7, 2021. — Picture by Shafwan Zaidon

BANGI, April 7 — Already struggling to make ends meet, a group of traders in Sungai Ramal, Selangor have now lost their stalls and shops to bulldozers when the local council went ahead with a demolition order yesterday, despite their entreaties.

The stalls and shops, located at Kampung Manickam Bangi Lama, were closed down by order of the Kajang Municipal Council (MPKj) at the start of the year, leaving many of the traders without a source of income. According to the traders, the reason was never made clear.

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Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) secretary-general S. Arutchelvan speaks during a press conference on Kg Manickam Bangi Lama shops destroyed in Bangi Old Town, April 7, 2021. — Picture by Shafwan Zaidon

At a news conference today, the traders said they have been going to different authorities one after the other — the MPKj, the Hulu Langat District Land Office, as well as their local assemblyman and MP — for help to reopen their businesses.

One restaurant owner, Abu Bakar Mohamad, 59, said the MPKj and the Hulu Langat District Land Office told them to put their requests to reopen their stalls and shops in writing.

“Those of us who did so were either rejected by the authorities or ignored altogether. In desperation, we turned to Sungai Ramal assemblyman Mazwan Johar and Bangi MP Ong Kian Ming,” he told reporters outside the demolished stalls this evening.



Part of the Bangi Lama shops demolished by the local council in Kg Manickam Bangi Lama in Bangi Old Town, April 7, 2021. — Picture by Shafwan Zaidon

Speaking on behalf of the traders, Abu Bakar claimed that both Mazwan and Ong verbally assured them of help, and that they need not make any formal applications.

“We were told that since the land upon which our businesses stand upon is owned by the state government, there is no urgent need to reclaim the land for development and that we could continue on once allowed to reopen.

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According to Abu Bakar, Mazwan met the traders that same day and promised that their businesses would be left alone until a suitable relocation site was found.

“However yesterday’s operation saw MPKj and Hulu Langat District Land Office personnel conduct a joint demolition. They initially said they would wait for Mazwan to appear, waiting until the late evening, but he never showed up.

“As a result, 12 of the 14 shops were torn down. The other two managed to avoid a similar fate as they managed to get a court order staying any action until April 12,” Abu Bakar said.

He also claimed the traders were informed that the demolition order came from the Mentri Besar’s Office.



One restaurant owner, Abu Bakar Mohamad, 59, said the MPKj and the Hulu Langat District Land Office told them to put their requests to reopen their stalls and shops in writing. — Picture by Shafwan Zaidon

Abu Bakar said he was stunned when he was told this, because their delegation had repeatedly sought an appointment with Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari, only to be turned down.

“There has been no effort to assist us to relocate our businesses, and now we want to know if the state government will compensate us for the demolition, as well as compensation for the loss of livelihood until an alternative location has been chosen for us.

“Most of us set up shop here as early as 1991, and we are known by the surrounding community. Although we would rather not move, if the state government had told us the land is needed for redevelopment, we would have done so as

chairman S. Arutchelvan.

“I am at a loss for words, since the state government maintains two policies in regards to this. The first maintains that all small businesses and hawkers affected by redevelopment must be relocated elsewhere in the event their original place is unsuited or not legal, after which demolition can only take place.

“The second policy, recently instituted in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, provides an opportunity to small traders and hawkers to find a suitable place elsewhere to do business if need be. All local authorities in Selangor have been ordered to grant them temporary operating licenses to that effect,” he said.



Sungai Pelek assemblyman Ronnie Liu was present at today's news conference with Parti Sosialis Malaysia deputy chairman S. Arutchelvan. — Picture by Shafwan Zaidon

Liu apologised to the traders and shopkeepers on behalf of the Pakatan Harapan-led state government, of which he is a part of as a DAP assemblyman.

“I will bring this to the immediate attention of those who can help or give solutions. I will personally speak to the mentri besar, hold discussions with MPKj and the Hulu Langat District Land Office, as well as confer with YB Mazwan and YB Ong to find a resolution to this matter,” he said.

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