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`Terrorised' in KL Chinatown

Suryani Dalip

ABOUT 55 traders, mostly restaurateurs, operating their business from rented shoplots along Petaling Street, are being forced to pay monthly rentals to a man claiming to have been appointed by the trustees of the shoplots.

The traders have claimed that the man, a former restricted resident, has threatened to damage their property if they refuse to pay rentals of between RM3,000 and RM10,000, depending on the locality of their shplot.

They claimed that the "reign of terror" started in February and to date six police reports have been lodged against the man for demanding money from them, and one report on causing damage to property.

"We know for sure that the man was not appointed by the trustees Cheong Wing Chan Sdn Bhd," trader Lee Chooi Peng said.

She said they had been paying monthly rentals of between RM136 and RM250 to the trustees for several years. "The lease agreement expired in March and the trustees have yet to renew it."

She claimed that the man, who had given his name as "Ah Man Chai", told them that the trustees had instructed him to tell the traders that they had decided to increase the rentals.

"We sent a letter to the trustees seeking an explanation and also to confirm if the man was acting for them. However, to date, we have not received any response and in the meantime this man is harassing us."

Lee said when she refused to give in to the man's demand, her shop was broken into on May 6 and several items were thrown out.

"He is obviously putting fear in us," she said, adding that the traders were terrified and wanted the police to do something about it.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Democratic Party secretary-general Wee Choo Keong said on May 9, the affected traders handed a petition to City Police Chief Datuk Kamarudin Ali to provide them protection against the thug.

He said a copy of the petition was also sent to the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister and Home Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai.

Wee said even if the trustees wanted the tenants out, they should get a court order to evict them.

"Some of the traders have been in business for 50 years," he said, adding that it was also strange that, despite the seven reports lodged by the traders, the police had not roped in the man for questioning.

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