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Collecting assessment arrears with tenants' help

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THE Kuantan Municipal Council has come up with a novel way of collecting assessment arrears - by getting tenants to pay their monthly rentals directly to it, instead of to their landlords.

The new payment method took effect on Sunday, the council's treasury unit director, Mohd Nor Afandi Abd Aziz, said.

He said the council had to resort to such an action because many owners of premises, including factories, failed to settle their assessments for a long time.

"To date, about RM15.9 million is owed to the council," he said when leading a 30-man council enforcement team on a special assessment arrears operation around town yesterday.

Under the current operation, he said the council would seize the property concerned if the premises were occupied by the owner.

"However, if they were rented out, the Municipal Council will direct the tenants to pay their monthly rentals to the council instead of to their landlords."

This method of collecting assessment arrears will continue until arrears owed by the owner have been settled fully, Mohd Nor Afandi said.

"The tenants can pay at any of our counters. If they fail to do so, we will seize the property that they are renting," he said.

Mohd Nor Afandi said the current operation would continue until the council has managed to collect at least RM5 million in arrears.

Last month, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad took local authorities to task for failing to collect taxes due to the Government.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said the local authorities were "a little lazy" in carrying out their responsibilities.