

**'Umno Youth members demanded protection money'**  
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**By S Pathmawathy**

Three businessmen say their workers have been terrorised by a group of men, allegedly Umno Youth members, who demanded protection money.

However, an Umno Youth member, who showed up unceremoniously while the businessmen were giving a press conference, denied the allegation and said it was "a baseless accusation".

umno youth demanding for protection money pc 181011 cheng chin heng and lee kok leangTwo of the businessmen - Cheng Chin Heng, 36 (left in picture), and Lee Kok Leong, 43, - who bought the ground floor unit of a hotel located on Jalan Haji Hussein in Chow Kit, said they went to the premises, which has been deserted for a long time, last Thursday to start renovation works.

While they were in the midst of planning the set up for their third CCH Hardware outlet, which they had purchased for RM8.25 million at an auction in June, they were approached by a group of men, led by a Titiwangsa Umno Youth division committee member Zulkeflie Mat.

"Four to five men came and they introduced themselves as representatives of the hawkers there. One of them was Zulkeflie. He gave me him business card and asked us to allow some time for the hawker stalls at the corridor to vacate," said Lee.

However, nothing more was conveyed during the meeting, said Lee, as police officers were present at that time.

"We actually have been waiting since June for the hawkers to vacate," he said.

umno youth demanding for protection money pc 181011 umno youth titiwangsa zulkeflie mat"Zulkeflie (right) and the others asked us to show them our ownership papers... but why should we? Who are they to make such demands? So I asked him to check with the previous owners or with the authorities," said Lee.

"We didn't entertain them and continued with our work."

The next move came unexpectedly, said Lee. Several men appeared at the premises the next day (last Friday), armed with wooden rods, assaulted one of their employees and smashed a side window of their lorry.

"One of them said this place was conquered by them... and demanded that we pay up. None of us (owners) were around, so they chased out our workers and even beat up one of them," said Lee.

The assaulted employee, Md Shahin Matbor, who is a Bangladeshi, informed Lee immediately that "the gangsters" warned them never to come back.

umno youth demanding for protection money pc 181011 assaulted md shahin matborMd Shahin (left) lodged a report at the Dang Wangi district police station on the assault the same day, and Lee said the police have been "idle".

Following police inaction, Lee and Cheng both lodged separate police reports - one in Pandan Indah and another in Dang Wangi - that Zulkeflie and another, only known as AD, have refused to vacate the

premises and "insisted that the area is being taken care of by Umno".

Fearing for their safety, Lee and Cheng called for a press conference at the City Villa Hotel next door and sought police protection as well.

They also took members of the media on a guided tour of the vacant premises.

Both the partners were surprised to find the unit empty, and said that equipment for the renovation that they left in a locked steel case were missing.

"Now I will have to lodge another police report on the missing machinery," Lee said, showing his frustration.

It was then that Zulkeflie showed up with another Umno member, Jaamat Jantan, and interrupted the press conference.

Approaching the reporters, Zulkeflie shouted out several times, asking why police and reporters were present.

dap disciplinary committee on tee boon hock 310710 tan kok wai 1Cheras MP Tan Kok Wai of the DAP (right), who was also present, told Zulkeflie that the businessmen have accused him of "hiring gangsters, assaulting their employees and demanding protection money".

"That's a lie... why would I do that? I only came here because 17 hawkers complained to me that they are being evacuated and I hoped to be a mediator to resolve the matter," said Zulkeflie.

He also accused the businessmen of not having the permission from the Kuala Lumpur City Hall to renovate the unit.

"I came here in peace, I never sent any thugs. If I did, why would I give them my business card?"

"I was appointed by Umno, which is the ruling government, to take care of the welfare of the hawkers here. That's why I'm here now," Zulkeflie said.

He repeatedly argued that he had only told the owners of the unit that they should be compassionate to the hawkers and give them a small sum to cover their losses upon their evacuation.

Angered by the comments made against him, Zulkefli lashed out at Tan for disparaging him and Umno.

"He (Tan) is not the representative of this area! It's just a political plot for this DAP MP," said Zulkeflie.

Probe the matter, police urged

Tan later criticised Zulkeflie's mannerism, and called on the police to probe the matter immediately.

"My sources say that the hawkers are paying RM800 a month to a syndicate here and with CCH Hardware clearing the corridor for renovation... it's a matter of some people losing their revenue," Tan said.

Asked if Zulkeflie requested that the CCH Hardware owners make compassionate payments to the hawkers, Lee denied this, and said it was not their responsibility.

"If they are not licensed to operate hawker stalls, then why should these guys give them any amount, for the matter?" he added.

A quick check with several hawkers in the area, however, revealed otherwise.

An employee of a stall opposite the site, that sells headscarves, told Malaysiakini that they paid nominal sums to have the surrounding areas cleaned.

umno youth demanding for protection money pc 181011 stalls outside city villa "I'm not sure how much my madam pays to have the stall here though," the woman said.

As the row of stalls erected along the corridor of the unit are only open for business in the evenings, Malaysiakini was unable to verify the extent of the claims by the various parties.

According to a City Hall enforcement officer, who was on patrol in the area, the majority of the hawkers there are licensed.

Late this evening, Tan told Malaysiakini that Dang Wangi district police chief Zulkarnain Abdul Rahman said investigations would be conducted under Section 427 and 506 of the Penal Code for committing mischer and criminal intimidation respectively.