

## **Jonker Walk chief: Don't blame Idris over closure**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**June 28, 2013**

**By Nigel Aw**

Jonker Walk committee chairperson Gan Boon Leong today said that people should not blame current Malacca Chief Idris Haron for wanting to close the popular night market on Jonker Street as they did not appreciate what the state government had done for the tourist site.

However, the former state exco member stressed that MCA was committed in ensuring the night market continues on and will work hard to lobby the chief minister.

"When (Former Malacca chief minister) Ali Rustam made me the (Jonker Walk) committee chief, he said we could hold any event at the stage here without a permit. Just do it, he said.

"He gave us all kinds of privileges, but we did not appreciate him or thank him, we disappointed him and scolded him, we refused to support him.

"So now they (state government) is doing what the opposition wanted, we cannot blame the (current) chief minister," he told journalists in Malacca after a protest in support of Jonker Walk.

DAP had 13 years ago, when the night market was first created, opposed the plan but is today in support of preserving the night market.

gan boon leongGan (right) said when Jonker Walk first started, he had personally paid three char kuey teow sellers, one fried oyster seller and one chicken rice seller RM100 per day to operate on Friday, Saturday and Sunday to ensure the night market took off.

Gan, whose statues could be found around Jonker Walk to commemorate his effort, said the site is now a must-visit for tourists visiting Malacca.

Idris had reportedly said that since the people here had supported DAP over MCA, the night market will be closed, thereby granting DAP's wish 13 years ago.

Ali had made way to his protege Idris to become chief minister in last month's general election as he moved on to federal politics, but suffered a shock defeat in the parliamentary seat of Bukit Katil, which is also his own home town.

Both MCA and DAP had held protest here in a bid to force the state government to reverse its decision on re-opening Jonker street to traffic, thus making it impossible for traders to set up their business.

'Political arena'

However, Gan chastised DAP for its protest which was followed by a ceramah condemning the state government for the closure.

"Previously, they were against Jonker Walk, now these people are here shouting and scolding (the state government).

"We (MCA) are here to solve this problem, not to shout or scold, that will not solve the problem," he said.

He added that DAP's style of handling the matter was unproductive in helping the traders on Jonker Walk.

"If we want to appeal to the state government to keep Jonker Walk, we must do it properly and politely.

"If you keep shouting and scolding, do you think the chief minister will agree (to rescind the decision to close Jonker Walk)?" he said.

Meanwhile, Gan's son, Tian Loo (right) who is also Malacca MCA chief, also accused DAP of turning Jonker Walk into a political arena.

However, Tian Loo, who is also Jonker Walk committee deputy chairperson, said he hoped Idris will listen to the voice of the people and allow Jonker Walk to go on.

"We met the chief minister once but he was quite adamant (about opening Jonker Street to traffic) and we are disappointed by this.

"I appeal to MCA president Chua Soi Lek to help raise this at the federal level so that the federal government can pass on the message to the state government," said Tian Loo, who lost in last month's general election.

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