

Komtar traders: We regret voting Pakatan to power
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The ongoing spat between the vocal Ramadan bazaar traders in Komtar and the state government has not dissipated despite this being the holy month.

Today, the traders, represented by the Komtar Merchants Association, expressed their anger and regret that they had thrown their support behind Pakatan Rakyat in the last general election.

They targeted their dissatisfaction squarely at Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng for battling them through the media, although they have requested to speak to him directly, to no avail for the past two years.

Lim has denied prohibiting the traders from running their business at Komtar, and has instead accused KMA of not complying with procedures to settle the payment before the stalls were put up.

However, the group has met with Deputy Chief Minister Mansor Othman, and Komtar restoration committee chairperson and assemblyperson Ng Wei Aik.

"We wanted changes, so we voted Pakatan in, but see how they have treated us, their voters. Imagine, if we did not vote for them, how would they have treated us?" lamented KMA vice president Mohamad Ghani Abdul Jiman.

"This is not a government after the people's hearts... it is a government that steals from the people," he said.

Warning of legal action

Mohamad Ghani's response came after a reminder from the Penang Development Corporation (PDC), which manages Komtar, that the KMA is yet to settle the rental for space provided for the Ramadan bazaar.

PDC (property division) senior assistant manager Roslan Hassan released to the media today a statement reminding the association to pay up the fees.

It is learnt that KMA has been told it would face legal action if it did not settle the total fee of RM37,500 (RM50 x 25 stalls x 30 days).

"KMA has not paid the rental, even though it has collected the money from the traders," Roslan said.

But KMA remained adamant that it would only settle the rental fees at the end of Ramadan, as has been its past practice.

"What is the government afraid of? We have not owed anyone any NONEmoney before," Mohamad Ghani (right) screamed.

"Why do they keep harping on this issue? As a practise, we pay at the end of the month, not at the beginning," he said, adding that PDC, as merely the caretaker of Komtar, should not be asserting its power over the traders in this matter.

The disgruntled trader also accused PDC of "practising double standards", saying that it had allowed a businessman to set up his stall in Komtar with a two months' grace period to settle his rental.

"We have the proof of this happening. We will reveal it if the PDC talks too much," Mohamad Ghani warned.

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