

Why 2km radius from Lot 10? ex-NST boss asks Putrajaya
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KUALA LUMPUR, July 9 — Datuk A. Kadir Jasin questioned today Putrajaya’s allegedly arbitrary decision to designate the 2 km zone where soup kitchens are banned, centred from Lot 10 shopping mall in Bukit Bintang.

The former New Straits Times (NST) group chief editor also questioned whether the decision by the Federal Territories Ministry was influenced by the fact that the mall is owned by a subsidiary of YTL Corp.

“For this latest FT Ministry’s decision, my question is, why specifically to 2 km away from Lot 10? What is so special about Lot 10 anyway?” Kadir wrote in his blog.

“I hope it is not because it belongs to YTL Corporation, whose Managing Director, Francis Yeoh Siok Ping, had famously declared that he was not Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad’s crony.”

Long accused of enjoying the political patronage of Dr Mahathir when he was prime minister, Tan Sri Dr Francis Yeoh made a public denial of both the perceived favouritism and prevalence of “crony capitalism” in Malaysia in May.

But news reports on his comments led to scathing attacks against Yeoh.

“I am sure other high-end property owners also do not like soup kitchens to be operating in the vicinity of their establishments. So why did the government single out Lot 10 for this preferred treatment?” added Kadir.

The former NST boss said he would only support a ban against soup kitchens if it is accompanied by an assurance that the government can take care of every homeless person currently looked after by the NGOs.

“To the government of Mohd Najib Abdul Razak, I say this: Those selfless NGOs, volunteers and donors came forward to help because the authorities had not done much to feed and assist these poor people,” he said to the prime minister.

Kadir also said that ministers will be more in touch with the lives of the public if they spend less time in their “posh offices” and “being rushed around in escorted convoys”.

Instead, they should spend time on the ground with walkabouts like Dr Mahathir did during his time, he said.

“Malaysia will be more meaningful if they show a bit more sincerity and honesty in fulfilling the promises of people first and performance now,” he said.

Yesterday, the Federal Territories Ministry postponed its ban on soup kitchens operating within central Kuala Lumpur to after Hari Raya after a nearly three-hour discussion with soup kitchens failed to result in a final solution on the matter.

The government will also hold a “town hall meeting” with the homeless soon, as an avenue for vagrants here to voice their complaints so the government can improve their standard of living.

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