

Headline	DBKL: Hawkers with electricity arrears must change their attitude		
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DBKL: Hawkers with electricity arrears must change their attitude

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ABOUT 80% of traders operating stalls in Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) food courts have settled their electricity arrears amounting to some RM1.4mil.

DBKL Socio-economic Development executive director Anwar Mohd Zain said 1,054 accounts had accumulated arrears amounting to a whopping RM2mil. "So far, about 851 or 80% of the traders have settled their electricity arrears.

"The rest have 24 months to clear their arrears but they only have until the end of the year to change the account to their names.

"If they fail to do so, we will proceed to disconnect the meter,"

he said.

When asked the reason traders were defaulting on their bills, Anwar said: "This is an attitude problem. They know very well the conditions when they applied for their licence, the terms which they had agreed upon.

"And one of those conditions is that a trader must change the name of the stall's electricity account, from the previous owner to his own name, so that the current owner is responsible for any charges due.

"By changing the account to his (or her) name, the current stall trader will have to be fully responsible for the bill.

"However, most of them don't do it. So when the bill arrives, they simply ignore the charges because someone else's name is on the bill

and they think they can get away with not paying," Anwar said.

He recounted a recent incident where 48 traders at a food court in Setapak had arrears amounting to thousands of ringgit, and most of them had not changed the name on the electricity bill.

"Since TNB had issued notices to disconnect for non-payment, we decided to settle the payments first and bill the traders later," he said.

Anwar added that traders had until Dec 31 to facilitate any changes and DBKL would give them 24 months to settle the arrears.

He added that traders had to sign pledge forms (*surat akur janji*) to ensure a smooth transition.

"All they need to do is settle their respective bills for their units, while DBKL is responsible for the common

areas, staircases and toilets."

Last month *StarMetro* reported that DBKL had settled electricity bill arrears at the D'Rejang food court in Taman Sri Rampai amounting to a whopping RM55,000.

Tenaga Nasional Bhd had issued a notice to recover the arrears. Out of the 75 units, 48 had defaulted on their monthly payments since the past year, with one account accumulating up to RM8,000 in arrears.

The bills were issued under separate accounts, but all the accounts were owned by DBKL.

DBKL has issued about 6,331 licences in Kuala Lumpur, out of which 1,255 are for licences issued to traders operating in 62 food courts.

Anwar said DBKL had addressed the financial difficulties faced by

traders operating in the city who were struggling to make ends meet.

Licensed traders were given rental and licence fee exemptions last year and a 50% discount on both fees this year.

"We are very supportive of anyone who is willing to work hard to earn a decent living in Kuala Lumpur.

"But we do have a few pet peeves that we will not tolerate — those who have zero interest in doing business after obtaining a licence, those who don't pay the rent, sublet their licence to a third party, hire illegal foreign workers or don't pay their utility bills.

"There are responsibilities that come with a DBKL licence and those who are lucky to get it must not abuse it," Anwar said.