

Riot at Kuching City Mall eatery: 13 men claim trial

KUCHING: A total of 13 men claimed trial in the Magistrates' Court here to a charge of rioting while using objects capable of being used as weapons at an eatery along Jalan Kuching City Mall.

The accused, aged between 20 and 34, pleaded not guilty before Senior Assistant Registrar Abdurrahman Abrar Jarni to the charge under Section 148 of the Penal Code, which carries a maximum term of five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both upon conviction.

They allegedly committed the offence at the eatery around 10.30pm on March 17.

Deputy public prosecutor Muhammad Aidil Akmal Sharidan sought bail of RM5,000 with one local surety for each accused to ensure their attendance at all court proceedings.

Defence counsel Ralph Lee, representing 10 of the accused, argued that his clients should not have been charged as they were victims during the riot and were 'defending themselves.' He added that three of them were also complainants in the case.

According to Lee, his clients had fully cooperated throughout

the investigation and had shown no signs of absconding.

Abdurrahman granted bail of RM3,500, undeposited, with two local sureties for Lee's clients, while the remaining three accused, who were unrepresented, were allowed bail of RM3,500 deposited with one local surety. The court also fixed May 4 for pre-trial case management.

It is understood that the incident began when the 10 accused were dining at the eatery and a large group of men arrived, provoked them, and overturned a table.

A riot then ensued, during which both sides allegedly used chairs, metal objects, and drinking glasses as weapons to attack each other. The incident resulted in physical injuries to several individuals and caused property damage at the premises estimated at RM3,000.

It is further understood that the dispute stemmed from a disagreement over a debt of RM12,000. A total of 36 individuals were reportedly involved in the incident, with 13 still at large.

The case was investigated by Insp Awang Iswandi Awang Mahmuddin.



Lee (right) walks with his clients after they were granted bail. — Photo by Kentigern Minggu