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A long line of cars parked illegally along Jalan Trus in Johor Baru is one of the main factors contributing to traffic congestion in the area. — ABDUL RAHMAN EMBONG/ The Star

immediately drove off," he said, urging the authorities to take action against them.

A restaurant owner who has been operating here for the past 40 years said the problem had worsened and that not only were locals dominating the streets but also Indonesians and Vietnamese touts.

"I believe they are a syndicate as the men manning the street in front of my shop work on a rotation basis," she said, adding that many customers had complained that they were forced to pay the touts.

She added that the touts were not only a nuisance to motorists

but also an embarrassment as they marred the area that was popular among both locals as well as tourists.

A tout, who wanted to be known only as Amran, 49, claimed that their round the clock "services" was very much needed as they not only helped ease traffic congestion by guiding the motorists when parking their vehicles but also provided a sense of security as they looked after the cars while owners were away.

"Most of us do not extort money from motorists," he said, adding that he could make between RM30 to RM50 daily.

Meanwhile, city mayor A Rahim

Nin said a total of seven integrated operations with the Road Transport Department, police and the National Anti Drugs Agency had been conducted since February to overcome the problem.

"Apart from that, seven MBJB enforcement officers have been stationed at the hotspots where touts operate to chase them away," he said, adding that 16 were nabbed by the police during an operation on July 17.

He urged motorists not to give in to their demands and lodge a police report if they encounter aggressive touts who threaten to harm them or their vehicles.