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KL MALLS DESERTED

Shoppers stay away following reports of Covid-19 at 5 malls

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MALLS in the city where new Covid-19 cases were reported in the past week are seeing fewer visitors than usual.

During lunchtime, NU Sentral is usually crowded with people from offices nearby, but many shoplots were empty yesterday.

A similar situation was seen at Sunway Pyramid and KL Gateway Mall here, where new Covid-19 cases were reported recently.

A food vendor at Nu Sentral, who wanted to be known as Noor Faezhtun, 19, told the *New Straits Times* that the mall was usually packed with people buying food from 7.30am until lunchtime.

But people seemed to have stopped going since Monday, after a Covid-19 case was reported there, she said.

"Weekdays are usually busy for us, with crowds lining up to buy our nasi lemak from morning till afternoon. But it's now very quiet. I think since Monday we've seen a drop of 70 to 80 per cent in customers," she said yesterday.

Izati Ahmad Fauzi, 21, who works at a clothing and hijab accessories kiosk at the mall, said even though stores and kiosks were operating as usual, the number of shoppers had dropped drastically from the start of the week.

"Usually, about 5pm to 7pm, there would be a lot of people in this area. But since Monday, fewer people are shopping here.

"Even the popular clothing shop near my kiosk looked deserted."

She said customers at the kiosk she worked at were usually people who work in the area and those transiting between train journeys.

She said she followed the standard operating procedures (SOP) set by the authorities as part of health and safety measures.

Shopper Eric Koh, 53, said despite good compliance with the SOP by shoppers, news about the Covid-19 case at the mall had turned people away.

"It is understandable that people are getting more anxious these days. Here, I can see that people maintain physical distancing.

"As long as a vaccine is not available yet, people will continue to exercise caution in public spaces. I think we need a year or two to really get rid of the virus and get things back to normal."

He said each person had a duty to protect himself and others.

He said another factor leading to deserted malls might be the end of the six-month loan moratorium yesterday, which might prompt many people to be more cautious with their spending.

On March 25, Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin announced a six-month moratorium on loans, conversion of credit card balance to term loans and restructuring of corporate loans, an initiative worth at least RM100 billion.

This was introduced to ease the burden of small- and medium-sized enterprises and individuals caused by the pandemic.

Another NU Sentral visitor, student Muhammad Nur Alif Mohammad Nazri, 18, said seeing so few people at shopping malls around the city reminded him of the severity of the pandemic.

"My parents told me not to leave the house unless it is really necessary. I am here to do my assignment as I wait for the monorail train to arrive at KL Sentral."

A number of Covid-19 cases involving people who work at five malls in the Klang Valley had been reported in the last 10 days.

The Malaysia Shopping Mall Association said sanitisation, disinfection and deep cleaning of areas visited by those infected by Covid-19 had been carried out in accordance with Health Ministry guidelines. **Additional reporting by Safwah Abdul Razak**



The ice skating rink was almost empty at Sunway Pyramid in Subang Jaya, Selangor, yesterday.

PIC BY EIZAIRI SHAMSUDIN



The walkway linking NU Sentral and KL Sentral had much fewer people than usual yesterday. PIC BY SHAHMI IMRAN