



New look for old food court

Upgrade in progress: DBKL contract workers giving a fresh coat of paint to Medan Selera Damai in Jalan Batu Bata, Kuala Lumpur. — YAP CHEE HONG/The Star

KL's Medan Selera Damai to be refurbished, rebranded with new name to boot

By **BAVANI M.**
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MEDAN Selera Damai at Jalan Batu Bata in Kuala Lumpur has been identified for a makeover and will get a new name in an effort to inject life into the dying complex.

The food court — located near a commercial centre close to Pekeliling Bus Terminal and Sungai Gombak — was opened in 2006 but failed to attract crowds.

Over the years, the food court with 61 lots, saw many of its traders shutter down, one by one.

"It's very sad. It is a good location but businesses have been on the decline even before the pandemic," said DBKL Socio-economic Development executive director Anwar Mohd Zain.

"We are going to give it a fresh coat of paint and fix it up again, including adding new lighting to brighten up the place," he said.

Part of the rebranding exercise involves relocating food traders operating along Jalan Dewan Sultan Sulaiman 1 (near Quill City Mall on Jalan Sultan Ismail) to the food court.

"Jalan Dewan Sultan Sulaiman 1 is renowned for Kelantanese cuisine, especially the *singgang* dishes and we hope to leverage its popularity," Anwar said.

He hoped that those who enjoy Kelantanese cuisine would make the effort to go to the food court when traders move in by early next year.

The food court is 1km away from Jalan Dewan Sultan Sulaiman 1.

"Once the upgrading works are done,

Medan Selera Damai will be renamed. For now, we have settled with the name Singgang@Damai, but it is not cast in stone. We are still toying with it."

Anwar said DBKL hoped the food court would attract visitors once the makeover was completed.

More than a makeover needed

StarMetro visited the Damai food court during lunch hour recently and found only six stalls open.

Damna Husin, who operates La Bonda Corner, has been selling nasi ayam for more than 10 years here. She said the area lost its lustre long before the pandemic hit.

"It is a nice location with a view of Sungai Gombak but I think DBKL should do something to promote this place. Many people

still don't know that we are here," the 60-year-old said.

Rosita Kedel, who operates Rosita Kitchen stall which sells Negri Sembilan cuisine, said DBKL should repair fans and lights in the food court.

"Repainting the place is not enough. The fans here have not been working for a long time and at night, this place looks like a nightclub with dim lighting," the 55-year-old remarked.

A diner, who only wanted to be identified as Zulkifli, said DBKL should also ensure adequate facilities such as parking space, surau and toilets were available.

"Parking is available nearby but there are no proper signage for it, and the surau has been closed for a long time," he said.

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Traders along Jalan Dewan Sultan Sulaiman 1 are popular for their singgang dishes — a type of Kelantanese dish.

Traders want more time before shifting to food court

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Zulkifli added that DBKL should allow some ticketing counters from Pekeliling Bus Terminal to operate at the food court too.

“People who come to buy tickets can spend time at the food court while waiting for their buses to arrive. I am sure the place will be popular again,” he added.

Relocation anxieties

Meanwhile, traders at Jalan Dewan Sultan Sulaiman 1 are hoping for an extension of time before moving to the Damai food court.

“We have no choice. We know we have to move by early next year. But we hope that DBKL can postpone the relocation exercise

until after Hari Raya which is in early May,” said a trader who wanted to be known as Ruksan.

Another trader agreed with Ruksan, saying that they needed time as they just recently resumed business and wanted to make the most of their time at Jalan Dewan Sulaiman 1.

“I hear the Damai food court is not ‘happening’. I am worried that my customers will not go there after we move,” said Ruslan Dek who sells barbecued fish.

“Give us time, please,” he said.

There are some 20 stalls here along Jalan Dewan Sultan Sulaiman 1 which operate in the evenings between 5pm and midnight. The place is very popular for late-night snackers.



The Damai food court has been seeing a decline in business for years.



Anwar says DBKL hopes to leverage the popularity of Kelantanese cuisine offered by traders who will be relocated to the Damai food court.



Damna says the area turned quiet long before the pandemic hit the city.

DBKL: Hawkers with electricity arrears must change their attitude

By BAVANI M.
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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.