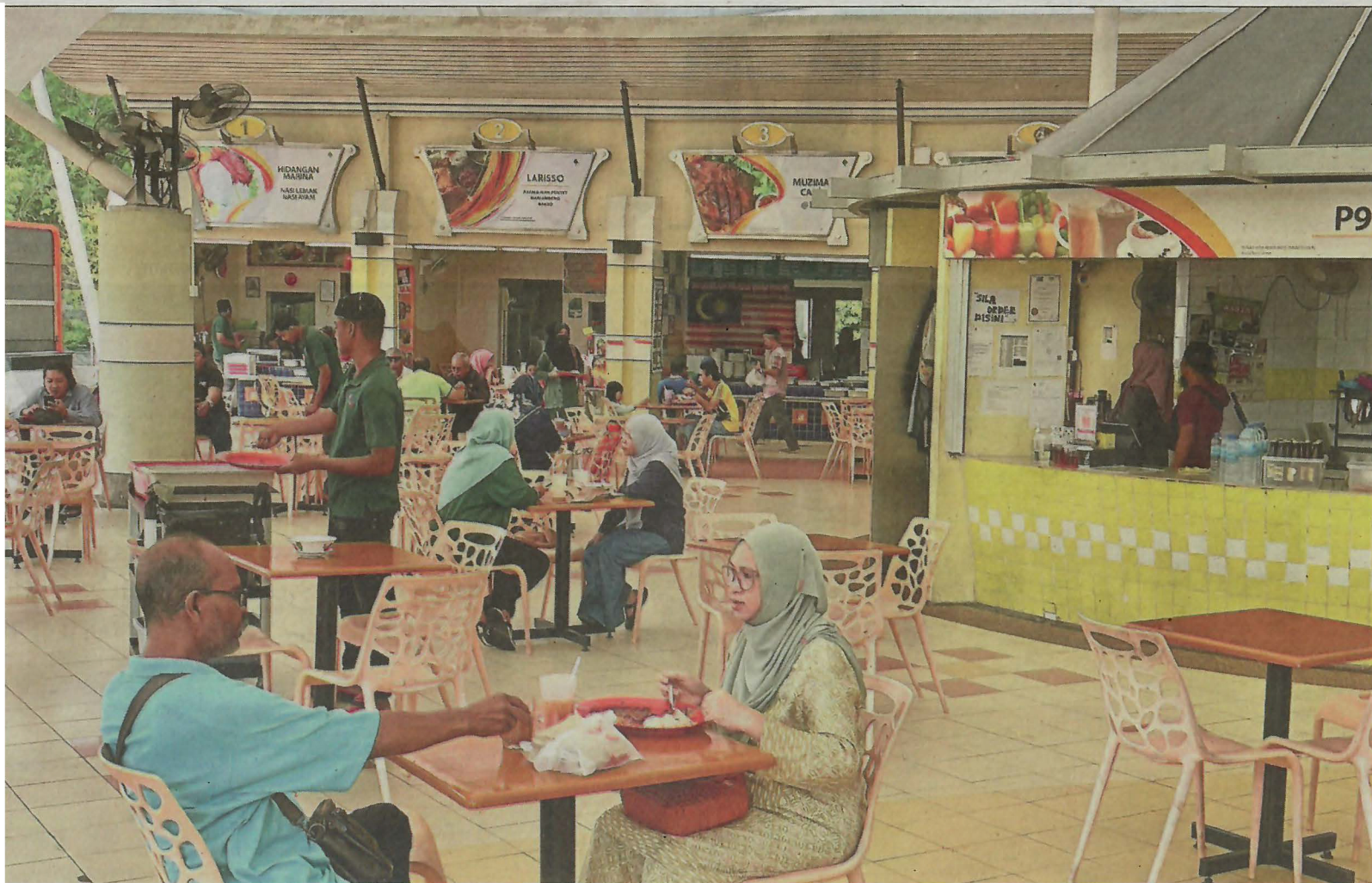


Take a leaf from **Putrajaya**

Rundown hawker centres in other parts of Klang Valley should emulate the administrative capital's vision for clean, well-managed food courts by keeping menu offerings distinct and ensuring tenants are financially stable to rent lots. **>2&3**



Alluring dining destination: The Precinct 9 food court in Putrajaya is the ideal picture of a successfully run food court. — LOW BOON TAT/The Star



Precinct 9 food court in Putrajaya is an example of a well-run council facility that offers affordably priced food. — Photos: LOW BOON TAT/The Star

Food courts need a revamp

Despite cheap rental of council-run facilities in Klang Valley, vendors say conditions not conducive for business

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AT PRECINCT 9 food court in Putrajaya, buskers fill the air with music as plates are cleared from tables the moment diners leave.

Tenants do not have to worry about washing cutlery and tableware as the food court has an industrial dishwasher.

Persatuan Penjaja dan Peniaga Kecil Putrajaya vice-president Tengku Mohd Sharifudin Tengku Alias, 58, who has been operating there for 16 years, said in terms of comfort and hygiene, the administrative capital's food courts were the best-run in Klang Valley.

He said the pioneer management had gone to the extent of ensuring no two tenants sold the same food.

"It ensures a variety of dishes at the food court. The contractor was also tasked with selecting tenants and only the best were invited.

"In a way, these measures helped to ensure business continuity."

Poor maintenance

Sadly, not all council-run food courts operate in the same way.

One such is D'Medan Selera Madani, formerly known as Pines Bazaar at Kompleks Tun Sambanthan in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur.

Persatuan Penjaja Pines Bazaar chairman Siva Kumar Munian, 47, said although beautification works were carried out this year on the eight-year-old building, stall operators wanted to see



Putrajaya's Precinct 9 food court has cleaners stationed round the clock to clear tables and perform general cleaning tasks.

better daily maintenance.

"Operation hours are from 6am until midnight but the cleaners only come once in the mornings.

"So places like public washing areas are not cleaned until the next day.

"The main draw of this food court is the banana leaf meal. Diners often eat with their hands and use the hand washing area after meals.

"These areas need to be cleaned throughout the day."

He also brought up ventilation issues, saying, "None of the exhaust fans in the shops are working and many of us have been putting up with the smell and smoke."

Many tenants not operating

Former MCA Wilayah Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) affairs

bureau chief Banie Chin, 63, who has had 23 years of experience in dealing with hawker and petty trader issues, said many council-run food courts in the city had been stagnant.

One example is Medan Selera Mega at Jalan Mega Mendung where many shops are shuttered.

"One important factor that has not been looked into at council-run food courts is tenant mix.

"We usually see the same or similar types of food being sold. Ideally, in a food court, there should be a good variety.

"When one is selling chicken rice, the second should offer fish-ball noodles and the third could be a rojak stall, for example.

"Efforts should also be made to attract one or two famous hawkers to occupy these units so that they can bring in the crowd.

"Tenants should also not be allowed to close their business as



Tengku Mohd Sharifudin says the administrative capital has the best-run food courts in Klang Valley.

and when they like.

"Those who have closed for more than a month without valid reason should not have their licences and tenancy renewed."

Maintenance of facilities such as toilets and other housekeeping duties also needed to be looked into, Chin added.

"That tenants are paying low rent cannot be used as an excuse (for poor maintenance), because the building and maintenance of council-run food courts are subsidised by taxpayers."

Rental rates for DBKL food courts are valued according to location and space size.

At D'Medan Selera Madani and Pusat Penjaja Bandar Permaisuri, for example, current monthly rental is RM330 and RM380, respectively.

In comparison, Putrajaya Precinct 9's rental rates are between RM800 and RM2,500.

Member of DBKL advisory board Andre Lai, 43, agreed that



At DBKL-run Pusat Penjaja Bandar Permaisuri, the current rental is RM380 per month.



Nurulain (in red) says hand-washing areas at Komplek Tun Sambanthan food court need to be cleaned throughout the day as they are heavily used.

more needed to be done.

“Not all traders are located at prime locations, so they suffer from lack of foot traffic.

“Some even have to compete with illegal traders right outside the food court.”

As such, he said, stronger teams were needed for enforcement, licensing and rebranding.

Lai also suggested food court hawkers form alliances to address internal issues.

“Issues like encroachment of trading areas and seating arrangements can be ironed out internally so they do not escalate into hostile situations, which can drive away customers.

“A cohesive association can also work together to come up with ideas to improve business.”

Putrajaya Corporation (PPj) corporate communication director Norzita Abdul Razak said the local authority was committed to ensuring its food courts were well managed and maintained.

There are four food courts in Putrajaya and seven areas where food kiosks can operate.

The cost of maintaining and cleaning the four food courts at Precincts 8, 9, 11 and 16 is RM99,500 per month, totalling RM1.2mil a year.

Apart from a reduction in rental for Precinct 9 tenants starting this month (which is set to reduce PPj’s monthly revenue by RM37,400, rates at other venues

have remained the same.

“Valuation of rental rates is done by a tenant selection committee headed by the PPj president,” said Norzita.

“It is based on location, access, premise size, facilities, services and economic environment of the surrounding area.”

She said the uniqueness of an applicant’s menu was also taken into consideration as well as financial ability to meet running daily operations and monthly rental payments.

Under Kuala Lumpur 2023 Lestari Niaga initiative, DBKL has allocated RM30mil for the upgrade and beautification of 83 hawker centres and static roadside stalls under its purview as well as those belonging to Health Ministry and Federal Territories Land and Mines Office.

Thirty-eight food courts are involved in this project.

Tenancy agreements are for three years and are renewable. Tenants who have ceased operations for a period longer than three months will have their licences revoked.

To address issues of foreign workers, subletting and monopolisation, both local authorities say, only one name per family is allowed to apply. Applicants must be Malaysians.

Successful tenants and their workers will be given identification cards which must be displayed prominently at the stalls.