



AN INSTITUTION RESURRECTED

Sunway Group transforms Kuala Lumpur landmark The Mall into a contemporary shopping destination with Sunway Putra Mall

BY PETRINA FERNANDEZ

Before the shopping boom in Kuala Lumpur, one that transformed the city's landscape into a chequerboard of malls in the last decade, an outing to a mall was a special occasion indeed. In fact, places like The Mall along Jalan Putra were extremely fashionable destinations in the 1990s, all the more so because they were few and far between.

As the scene evolved quickly, however, The Mall inevitably fell behind the times and was eschewed in favour of its younger, trendier contemporaries. That is, until Sunway Group acquired the property — and the adjacent hotel and office tower — in 2013. It invested RM1 billion in refurbishment and reopened the former as Sunway Putra Mall earlier this year, adding to its growing shopping destination portfolio that encompasses Sunway Pyramid, Sunway Giza in Kota Damansara and Sunway Carnival in Penang.

Vibrant hues of yellow, orange and red, inspired by the dazzling Sun-Drop Diamond of South Africa, enliven the new facade and transform the neighbourhood, giving it an instantly invigorating facelift. Within it are the makings of a prime shopping destination with over 300 stores spread across 51,000 sq m, featuring cult global brands such as H&M, Uniqlo and Cotton On as well as the likes of Neals Yard Remedies, Tony Moly, Timberland, Coreo by Hidatakayama and Sports Direct. In pride of place are anchor tenants TGV, with six halls inclusive of

the beanbag-filled Beanplexx, and Cold Storage, which now offers delivery services to selected areas.

"We can't compete in terms of size so we differentiate ourselves with a selection of premium and exclusive offerings," said Sunway Putra Mall general manager Phang Sau Lian. "We have the first The Parenthood store in Malaysia, modelled after London's streets with dynamic activities for children and parents." The space includes a play area, childcare products and pampering corners such as a hair salon. "We also have the first DC Superheros Cafe in Klang Valley and cult Taiwanese fried chicken joint J&G Chicken, which people queue up daily in its country of origin."

Phang, who is also the assistant secretary of Persatuan Pengurusan Kompleks Malaysia, reported that over 50% of the 400 malls in Malaysia are located within Klang Valley. "As an operator, we are responsible for keeping up with the competition and identifying our own niches," she said.

Food is naturally a part of any happy outing and options are manifold. The Seleta Street food court of old has been reopened, its 28-year-old heritage-inspired facade still intact, while popular stores such as Marigame Udon, Las Vacas, Lygon Bistro, Red Lobster and DubuYo are also scattered around the complex. Seleta Street is one of four precincts within the mall, the others comprising Market Place, modelled after European street markets with a grocery, food and beverage options, florists and fruit stalls; Vanity Hall for beauty essentials; and Asian Avenue with contemporary regional clothing and accessory labels.

Not for nothing is "location, location, location" a real estate mantra — in this instance, the mall has ready, steady traffic from the residents and the corporate crowd in the neighbourhood, spanning from Kenny Hills in Bukit Tunku to Jalan Ipoh, Jalan Duta and Jalan Sentul.

"Connectivity is something the Sunway Shopping Malls management team excels at," said Phang, elaborating on the attention to detail and emphasis on convenience seen here. Access points are aplenty, with the mall adopting the elevated bridge from Kuala Lumpur City Hall to offer direct access from Seri Pacific Hotel, as well as pedestrian links from

the Putra KTM station, the PWTC LRT station and neighbouring condominiums Villa Puteri and Villa Putra. Safety is always a priority so in addition to security guards, the management has established a police kiosk in collaboration with the policemen from Bukit Aman and Chow Kit, as well as auxiliary police to patrol the surroundings.

As a nod to those who grew up around The Mall, the management also invited its neighbours and patrons to participate in the nostalgic The Brick Project — building the foundation of Sunway Putra Mall. Fond memories, wishes and words of encouragement by participants were written onto bricks and displayed in an exposed brick feature wall, honouring the legacy of its origins.

The hum of activity of The Mall still echoes in the bustle of its successor, which is picking up in volume as Christmas approaches. Eager to celebrate its first year-end holiday season in style, Sunway Putra Mall has quite an itinerary planned.

The concourses and corridors will be decked in fairy lights and red and gold ornaments will adorn a giant Christmas tree in this classic decor scheme. Carollers, arts and craft workshop for children and the must-have Santa Meet & Greet are also on the cards. Three tiers of rewards await shoppers, with spending of RM250 (RM200 for HSBC cardholders and Sunway Pals) entitling shoppers to two artisanal soaps and RM500 (RM400 for the VIPs mentioned earlier) offering two exclusive tickets to watch US-based magic show TrickStars — Masters of Trickery at Sunway Lagoon. Those who hit RM1,000 in purchases (RM800 for VIPs) will take home a Bobbi Brown or Clinique beauty gift set worth RM300.

To honour the season of giving is the "A Gift for a Wish New Year" programme in collaboration with Yayasan Chow Kit. Thirty-five underprivileged children aged 12 and under have drawn their Christmas wishes, to be displayed on a Christmas tree. Shoppers are welcome to contribute to the project by fulfilling a wish. The concierge is offering gift-wrapping services throughout the season, so whether picking up a present for an underprivileged child or splurging on a loved one, stop by to have your gifts wrapped and leave the mall relaxed.