



Sound check: A deejay testing out equipment at a bar in TREC KL, Jalan Tun Razak, in preparation for its reopening. (Mask was removed briefly for the photo.) — LOW BOON TAT/The Star

Let the music play

Nightclub operators are getting ready for the May 15 reopening and hope that **Kuala Lumpur City Hall** will speed up entertainment licence approvals.

By GRACE CHEN and JAROD LIM
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A TOTAL of 788 days — that is how long nightclubs have been prohibited from operating.

Now that they have been given the green light to resume business from May 15, everyone associated with the entertainment industry is looking forward to the day when dance floors can come alive again.

Nightspots in Kuala Lumpur are readying themselves with sound and light checks, and wooing their former staff back to serve customers on the big day.

As they rejoiced over the good news, some stakeholders recalled the uncertainty

they had to face in the past two years, not knowing if or when they could resume their jobs and activities.

One of them is deejay Shamalen Maheswaran, 27, who is thankful that keeping up with his skills means that he is fully booked from May 15.

"Since news of the lifting of the prohibition was announced, I had a lot of people calling me for gigs.

"I had to find ways to accommodate clients. It's gonna be a busy year for me," he said happily.

When the restrictions imposed by the movement control order put the brakes on his livelihood, Shamalen had to give up his rented apartment in Mont Kiara, Kuala

Lumpur, and move back to his hometown in Melaka.

Though it meant taking a 75% pay cut, he decided to work as a waiter at an international resort chain in Desaru, Johor, for eight months.

"I went through a rough patch but where there is no struggle, there is no strength," he said, adding that his mother reminded him to pray and not give up hope.

Shamalen is grateful to his family for keeping his spirits up and not allowing him to let his deejay skills get rusty.

"My elder brother and our close friends encouraged me to perform online and release mixtapes," he said.

One such online performance would earn

him and 123 other deejays recognition in the *Malaysia Book of Records*.

From Aug 21 to 30 in 2020, they performed online for 228 hours with no breaks.

Shamalen's slot was on Aug 29 from 4am to 6am.

The event ended at midnight on Aug 30 to ring in National Day.

Now Shamalen is looking forward to this May 15 as his schedule is fully booked.

To get ready for his gigs, he downloaded tonnes of new music and has gone back to promoting his services on social media to spread the word that he is back.

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MOTHERS DAY EVENT

Selangor Iraitan Ilam Cultural and Educational Association will hold a Mother's Day celebration from 8am to 1pm on Sunday at Lot 16080, Lorong 10, Taman Alam Shah, Klang. There will be cultural performances and a free vegetarian lunch. For details, call John Rajoo at 012-333 7774.

DBKL BUDGET FEEDBACK

Kuala Lumpur City Hall is gathering input to draft its budget for 2023 including on topics such as cleaning, roads, drainage, public housing maintenance, hawkers management and recreational facilities. Suggestions accepted at <https://sites.google.com/view/ideabelanjawan2023> until May 31. For details, call 03-2617 9000 or 1-800 88 3255.

MPAJ SURVEY

Ampang Jaya Municipal Council is conducting a survey to draft its Budget 2023. Among issues being reviewed are cleanliness, housing, environment, safety, traffic and enforcement. Ratepayers can give their input at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1FAIpQLSf5U1K-FLLZQov.../viewform>

VIDEO CONTEST

Kuala Langat Municipal Council is organising a Hari Raya greeting video contest. Submission deadline is May 18. For details, visit bit.ly/mpklCeriaRaya

CAR-FREE DAY

The weekly car-free session in Kuala Lumpur will be held on Sunday from 7am to 9am on major streets in the Golden Triangle.

DIABETES SCREENING

National Diabetes Institute is offering free blood screening on weekdays from 9am to 5pm until June 30 at Diabetes Resource Centre, Bandar Botanic Klang. For details, call 03-3319 4100/ 4200 or email enquiry.dcentersdiabetes@gmail.com

ELIMINATING RODENTS

Ampang Jaya Municipal Council is organising a rat eradication programme in Pandan Jaya. RM3 will be paid for each rat brought to the public field beside the Selangor Public Library Corporation at Jalan Pandan 4 from 8am to noon on May 21 and 28, June 11 and 25, July 9 and 23. For details, call 03-4285 7007 (MPAJ Health and Environment Department).

COMMUNITY GRANTS

Application for the Petaling Jaya Community Grant 4.0 is open until June 30. Successful applicants could receive between RM5,000 and RM50,000 from the Petaling Jaya City Council. For details, call 03-7954 1440 or email gerankomuniti@mbpj.gov.my

PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Deadline for Putrajaya Tourism Photography Contest has been extended to June 30. Theme is architecture and new tourism products such as glamping site, Putrajaya Steps, sandy beach and natural attractions. For details, visit <http://www.ptpc2022.info/>

PERAK

Revving up for full digital parking fee system by 2024

Coupons will no longer be sold to agents from June 1, says Ipoh mayor

By IVAN LOH
ivanloh@thestar.com.my

PAYMENT for public parking in Ipoh, Perak, will be fully digital by 2024.

Ipoh mayor Datuk Rumaizi Baharin said all payments would be made via the Park@Perak app as physical parking coupons would be gradually phased out from June this year.

He urged the people to download the app on their smartphones and familiarise themselves with the digital system.

"Physical parking coupons will no longer be sold to agents starting June 1," he said after chairing the Ipoh City Council (MBI) full board meeting.

"Existing coupons may still be sold to the public and can be used until Dec 31, 2023," he added.

Rumaizi said the app had been updated with the latest version.

It features new functions such as daily and monthly passes and allows users to check the status of their parking passes.

The app can be downloaded from Google Play Store, App Store and Huawei Gallery.

The city council parking unit can be contacted at 05-255 4377 / 4387 / 4388.

On another matter, Rumaizi said that since May 1, the city council started seizing the moveable properties of owners who failed to settle their assessment tax arrears.

He said MBI had repeatedly reminded the people to pay their



Motorists in Ipoh are urged to familiarise themselves with Park@Perak app's features. — Filepic



"Existing coupons may still be sold to the public and can be used until Dec 31, 2023."

Datuk Rumaizi Baharin

assessment tax but there were still those who failed to do so, even after warning notices were issued.

"For those who have problems in settling their arrears, we can negotiate ways for a resolution.

"I hope that the people will be more serious when it comes to fulfilling their responsibilities as ratepayers for the benefit of the public," he added.

Separately, Rumaizi said MBI

was in the process of preparing the draft for next year's budget based on its 2021-2030 Strategic Plan.

He said the city council welcomed suggestions and opinions from the public.

"We will open a platform this month for people to channel their ideas," he said, adding that the city council had set a target to strengthen its finances by achieving

RM300mil by 2030.

On dengue, Rumaizi said 129 cases had been reported as of April 23.

He said that as of April 25, there were outbreaks at six localities — Taman Desa Indah (six cases), Taman Galeri Kepayang (three), Taman Mansion (three), Taman Pelangi (two), Taman Cempaka (three) and Kampung Das Tambahan 2 (two).

"All these areas are not deemed hotspots.

"But we urge people to conduct preventive activities and create awareness of dengue," he said.

He reminded residents to ensure there were no containers with stagnant water in and around the vicinity of their houses, to prevent Aedes mosquitoes from breeding.

Cleaning efforts impeded by covered drains in Shah Alam

COVERED drains are hampering efforts to clear the clogged drains in Taman Sri Muda, Shah Alam in Selangor.

In a statement, KDEB Waste Management Sdn Bhd (KDEBWM) operations general manager Mohd Idris Mohamed Yusof said there were both covered and open drains along Jalan Ilham 25/23.

"We will look into clearing the open drains but covered drains are slowing down our cleaning efforts," he said.

In response to *StarMetro's* report, "Clogged drains in Taman Sri Muda pose health risk" on April

25, Mohd Idris said the drains along Jalan Tenang 25/54 and Jalan Abadi 25/58 were assigned to another contractor.

"The drains in question, including the monsoon drain along Persiaran Budiman, are not under KDEBWM's purview," he said.

The article reported that several clogged drains had turned into mosquito breeding grounds.

"After the first phase of flood cleaning in Taman Sri Muda, KDEBWM started removing all the rubbish and sediment from the drains.



Clogged drains in Taman Sri Muda pose health risk

Residents want rubbish cleared away to prevent mosquitoes from breeding.

Flashback to *StarMetro's* article on April 25.

"The programme took place from Feb 8 to March 31.

"There were 100 workers involved and KDEBWM also deployed suitable equipment for the drain-cleaning exercise in Taman Sri Muda.

"As a result, all drains within KDEBWM's job scope have been cleaned.

"After this, KDEBWM will continue its drain-cleaning activity twice a month as scheduled," said Mohd Idris. — By JAROD LIM



The Putrajaya Command Centre manned by an employee clad in traditional attire on the first day of Hari Raya Aidilfitri.

Council work goes on come rain, shine or holidays

REGARDLESS of the holiday season, services by local authorities continue especially concerning public safety and security.

At the Putrajaya Command Centre, staff turned up to work in their traditional attire on Hari Raya Aidilfitri.

The integrated operations centre monitors the safety, security, traffic flow, infrastructure and environmental sensors in public areas.

In the capital city, due to unpredictable weather, Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) general workers

with the help of Alam Flora staff, were busy cleaning the drains at flood hotspots in Jalan Dato Onn on May 3 and Lorong Sentul Manis on May 4, among other places.

An area near Bank Negara Malaysia's Sasana Kijang building in Jalan Dato Onn was flooded on the first day of Hari Raya Aidilfitri.

Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Dr Shahidan Kassim and Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Mahadi Che Ngah visited the site the same afternoon to ensure that the situation was under control.

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Though he had not bought any new equipment for the reopening, he did invest some RM500 in music pools so that his audience would be able to enjoy a flow of new music.

Shamalen will also be showing off some new skills and mashups to ensure he is able to provide party guests with a new line-up.

The increased demand for his services has allowed him to pick and choose his clients.

"My main criteria is that my clients must be trustworthy where payments are concerned.

"I will also ensure that we have agreements in black-and-white first to avoid any possible disputes in the event that nightclubs are ordered to shut again.

"My terms for now are that my clients must either put a 50% downpayment or pay upfront in full," he said.

Ready from the word 'go'

For nightclub owner Shyam Thakur, the lifting of the prohibition will see him launching the upstairs portion of his lounge.

Having opened his first bar in 2017 at TREC KL, the 39-year-old entrepreneur from New Delhi, India, set up two outlets between 2021 and 2022, also at the food and beverage hub.

In fact, his workforce grew from 16 to 43 during these two years.

That was possible as he had obtained the necessary licences to serve food and liquor as well as provide entertainment, like deejay performances, when he opened his first outlet.

"From the very beginning, I realised that if I only operated as a nightclub, there would be only one source of revenue.

"So, I decided that my concept would be to open as a restaurant from 5pm to 10pm. After that, I would have a deejay come in to play music.

"When entertainment activities like live bands and deejay performances were prohibited during the MCO, we were able to fall back on our restaurant and bar licence," he said.

As such, Shyam said his trained and experienced employees were all set for May 15.

"As soon as the SOP on nightclub operations is issued, we will be ready to grab business opportunities as they come up.

"We will have famous artistes and promotional deals on food and drinks.

"We will also be launching customer loyalty programmes," he said, adding that he had to pay more to lure better talents and artistes to his club.

"Some of them had changed professions but when we called them, they obliged because they truly love their art," said Shyam.

He managed to retain his key workforce, which is 70% Malaysians, as he continued to provide them with accommodation, food and basic pay when the prohibition on nightclubs and pubs was in force.

Shyam and his partners plan to open four more outlets in addition to the ones at TREC KL.

"All these outlets are based on the restaurant-and-bar concept as this will put us on a more stable footing, especially if restrictions are imposed again," he added.

Set SOP, speed up licences

Five months after the MCO was announced, Jeremy Lim, 41, took on the role of media liaison for Restaurant and Bistro Owners Association, for which he is vice-president.

'Entertainment industry players are banded together now'



Over the coming week, nightclubs at TREC KL will be carrying out full cleaning, disinfection and repairs. — Photos: LOW BOON TAT and LOW LAY PHON/The Star



After standing empty and quiet for more than two years, bars, nightclubs and lounges in Kuala Lumpur's city centre are eager to welcome patrons once again after receiving the green light from the government.

Since then, Lim has been voicing the sentiments of his peers.

The latest concern among nightclub operators is that **Kuala Lumpur City Hall's (DBKL) eLesen website** has been undergoing maintenance and upgrades since April 29.

A check revealed that the website will only be back in operations on May 9.

During this period, the counter at the DBKL Licensing and Business Development Department will also be closed.

"The website is the only way for entertainment licences to be renewed.

"If the site is down, how are the business owners going to renew their licences?"

"Hopefully, the mayor and the related licensing bodies can speed things up in time for May 15," said Lim in expressing disappointment that the website has been down for such an extended period of time.

"I hope by May 15, nightclub operators should be able to get the white card, at least," he said.

He explained that the understanding among operators was that those holding a white card would be able to operate for 30 days before receiving their official approvals.

If no approval is granted within this time frame, the operator will have to obtain another stamp from DBKL to carry on with business. There is no charge for stamping.

"We encourage all operators in Kuala Lumpur to apply for renewal directly at the DBKL website.

"If there are any questions or if they need assistance, they can either email or call the hotline directly," he advised.

While awaiting the National Security Council (NSC) and Health Ministry to announce the latest SOP, many businesses in the entertainment sector are in the process of rehiring their previous workforce.

"If we are able to have a definite answer on capacity or activity limitations, this will help the industry determine how many staff can be rehired," said Lim.

According to him, 60% of the businesses' former staff at present are ready to return.

However, he said that even if the old crew returned, retraining was needed for service and bar teams.

"Hopefully, our customers will allow for some mistakes and continue to support our industry," he added.

Generally, most operators will be doing refresher sessions on service, drinks and - eventually - SOP issued by the authorities, said Lim. He opined that the one good thing that had come out of the Covid-19 pandemic was that it had brought industry players closer.

"Before this, we were not banded together due to the competitive nature of our business," he pointed out.

He said the association's office-bearers hoped to continue their engagement with the Health Ministry, NSC and the district police on nightlife SOP.

"This is to ensure that all parties are aligned in terms of interpretation, to avoid confusion that may interrupt business operations in future," Lim added.

TREC Holdings general manager Kelvin Lam, 40, said the company would be hiring additional staff for its operations team.

"In the next few days, nightclubs will be carrying out full cleaning, disinfection, repairs and fine-tuning of sound, lights, visual and audio systems.

"Many are ordering stocks as well as arranging deejay performances, music band line-ups, theme nights and drink promotions," he noted.

He revealed that the management had also created new leasing packages for investors.

TREC KL, said Lam, used to have some 50 tenants which had since shrunk to 25.

But following the government's announcement, six new tenants are coming onboard, he said.

"All of us have been praying for this day to come and it finally has," he added.



Lim says DBKL's website has been down since April 29 and will only be back up on May 9.



Shamalen learned the importance of being able to adapt when his livelihood as a deejay was hit hard.



Lam says six new tenants have signed up to be part of TREC KL since the announcement.

Watch the video  TheStarTV.com