



Noida shopping malls open but few turn up

CAUTIOUS Malls, especially food courts, were deserted with only a few strolling around; mall managers say focusing on building trust among customers for now

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NOIDA: After the government permitted the reopening of shopping malls from Monday, a few of them opened for business in the city after being shut for over 70 days, owing to the nationwide lockdown from March 25 on account of Covid-19 pandemic. All necessary precautions to combat the pandemic were taken and marshals deployed to ensure social distancing among visitors.

In Noida, while most of the major shopping malls, including DLF Mall of India and Great India Place at Sector 18 and Logix at City Centre remained close, a few such as the Gaur City Mall at Greater Noida West, Shopprix at Sector 61 and Wave Mall in Sector 18 opened on Monday.

The malls, especially food courts, however, wore a deserted look with only very few strolling around. Mall managers were hopeful that business will pick up within a week. For now, they said they are focused on building trust among customers. A number of shops in these malls were also closed and so were dine-in restaurants. Only fast-food and eatery chains were open for business but these too saw thin attendance.

Compulsory hand sanitisation and temperature screening were seen at the entry gates of malls and all malls followed the 'no mask no entry' policy strictly. Extra staff were deployed on the premises to ensure social distancing among visitors.

"We hope that in the coming months, visitors will start coming like they used to. Obviously, people are scared and wary due to the pandemic, so what we are doing is building up their trust in us. We had started preparations



Very few people were seen at the Shopprix mall in Noida.

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for reopening a few days back, including cleaning the mall, sanitising all spaces and training our staff in accordance with the norms given by the government. As a precautionary measure, we have also restricted entry of elderly people over 65 years of age and children below 10 years," Vikas Tyagi, vice-president, Supertech Shopprix mall in Sector 61, said.

At Gaur City Mall in Greater Noida West, the staff had deployed 'Covid marshals' to ensure that people keep their masks on and don't hold hands.

"These marshals will ensure people maintain the social distancing. Our main aim is to ensure that people start trusting that malls are a safe space, and towards that end, we are taking all safety precaution," the mall

manager at Gaur City Mall said, without wishing to reveal his name.

Of a total of 150 shops at Gaur Mall, more than half remained closed. "All the store owners had been given a presentation on the standards that they will have to adhere to, including sanitising hands of every customer. Since this is the first day, we are happy to see even the thin attendance and are hopeful that things will get back to normal within a week," the manager said.

With posters reading 'this toilet had been sanitised' and 'dos and dont's, the malls have also pasted stickers on elevators to ensure social distancing.

Meanwhile a few shopping malls stated that they are not yet prepared and will take a week's time to make all necessary

arrangements to ensure public safety.

"We are not ready yet to open and are taking all necessary preparations. It will take at least a week or so to restart operations," Shamim Anwar, PRO, Great India Place (GIP) in Sector 18, said.

The Logix mall at Noida City Centre said it will start operations from Tuesday.

The state government's standard operating procedure (SOPs) ask the malls to ensure social distancing, mandatory thermal screening, masks, staggered entries and operations of food courts at 50% seating capacity. Mall managers have been advised to have an isolation room to keep any worker or visitor showing symptoms of Covid-19, till medical help arrives.

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