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Malls to have thermal screening, sanitisation tunnels, staggered entry

FE BUREAU
New Delhi, June 5

THE GOVERNMENT HAS allowed shopping malls outside containment zones to open from Monday (June 8), albeit with thermal screening of shoppers, staggered entry and a proper crowd management strategy. The measures form part of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) issued by the home ministry (MHA) on Thursday.

As the government moves ahead with Unlock India 1.0 and tries to revive the economy, which has taken a hit due to the novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak, malls and shopping complexes have been allowed to open, but with precautions, in a bid to boost retail demand.

As per the SOPs, thermal screening will be mandatory at the entrance and only those shoppers will be allowed who use face masks

that are to be worn at all times. Hand sanitisers should also be placed at the entrance and only asymptomatic customers and visitors will be allowed.

Entry to shopping malls should be allowed in a staggered manner and adequate manpower should be deployed to ensure social distancing norms are followed.

Apart from SOPs, malls will have an immersive disinfection process for air conditioning and fresh-air systems, alternate seating arrangements at F&B outlets, plexi-glass shields, isolation rooms for customers and staff with symptoms, etc.

Pushpa Bector, executive director of DLF Shopping Malls, told FE that the company has been preparing for the past two months and is geared up to open the malls. The firm runs seven high-end shopping malls. "We are also embracing technology for providing real-time foot traffic, real-time notifications



on safety and cleanliness, booking of time slots, golden hours to visit our malls which our consumers can experience very soon on DLF Mall's Lukout app," she noted.

Bector said DLF is initially looking at re-opening malls at 12:00 pm and shutting as per curfew hours set by the government, so that consumers feel safe to come in during that time. It is also setting up protocols for

foot traffic control at the entrances, along with deployment of the mall staff at the walkways and common areas, to ensure adherence of social distancing norms.

"Right from temperature checks at entrance, three-steps rollovers at escalators, permanent distance markers in the elevator, repeated sanitisation of common places including washrooms; trained staff and more, we are positive to enable a safe yet enjoyable shopping experience for our customers," she added.

Food and beverage brands will reduce seating arrangements to 50% and maintain placing of seating and tables six feet apart for all customers. They will be accepting pre-orders to avoid long queues and there will also be a focus on more of take-aways, Bector said.

Pacific Group, which runs four malls, will give educational messages through online

and offline platforms on Covid-19 through two characters, Harry and Jazz. For this it will use life-size cut-outs, social media animations, etc. "We have also taken a decision to have a hospital partner for training and support, and a Covid-19 task force and emergency response team (ERT) for strict adherence and action. We will also have a state-of-the-art contactless food-ordering and payments app for food courts and will encourage cashless payment methods at all stores and food counters," Pacific Group executive director Abhishek Bansal said.

Gaurs Group managing director Manoj Gaur said, "We are committed to taking all necessary measures such as thermal checking, sanitisers, social distancing as prescribed norms, regular sanitisation, controlled hours and sanitisation tunnel at all entry points". The group has two malls in Greater Noida West and Ghaziabad.

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