

18 May 2021

PRESS STATEMENT – HOTSPOT IDENTIFICATION BY DYNAMIC ENGAGEMENT (HIDE) NEW LIST

This press statement represents the view of the following associations representing the shopping mall and retail industries nation-wide in Malaysia as follows:

- Persatuan Pengurusan Kompleks Malaysia (PPK) (or Malaysia Shopping Malls Association) <http://ppkm.org.my/>
- Malaysia Retailers Association (MRA) <https://mra.com.my/>
- Malaysia Retail Chain Association (MRCA) <https://www.mrca.org.my/>
- Bumiputra Retailers Organisation (BRO)

We are absolutely bewildered by the press statement on 17 May 2021 by Dato Seri Dr Adham Baba, Minister of Health titled: *Nowhere to HIDE: New list to show malls where families met up for Hari Raya* wherein it was stated that shopping malls were used for ‘family gatherings’ during the recent festive season.

Upon the sudden introduction of the HIDE system and from our understanding of the methodology used in the predictive modeling, our Malls have immediately rearranged our process of admitting shoppers. Instead of allowing shoppers to first scan the MySejahtera QR code, the process has now been reversed with our gate-keepers firstly sighting the risk status of the shoppers from their Mysejahtera home screen. Only low-risk status shoppers are allowed into the mall. This is to remove the incidents of non-low-risk shoppers to be wrongly registered with Mysejahtera as having entered the mall even though they may have been denied entry due to their non-low-risk status. Furthermore, only if their temperatures are below 37.5°C are they only allowed to scan the mall’s QR code to enter the mall. This new entry procedure is to ensure that those deemed as low risk which includes ‘casual contact, with no symptoms’ are deemed safe to enter the mall. It is definitely an extremely onerous procedure involving the deployment (and cost) of more manpower which has already resulted in numerous altercations with the public, but nevertheless, necessary to ensure that malls are safe destinations.

It is not conceivable that malls be penalized for having admitted only low-risk family members who have visited together as a family outing. There is no way for the mall to determine if the individuals are part of a family outing group nor it is wrong for a family to go out together as a family outing, especially when the shoppers are complying with the relevant SOPs and complying with social distancing. In any case, members of the same family household do not practise and it is not practical to practise social distancing at home.

Any members of the public can come to shopping malls so long they are in the low-risk category and we have no way of stopping anyone from entering the mall to shop or do their errands including buying essentials and takeaway meals, or as indicated, even meet up. The onus must be on the rakyat to refrain from such gatherings as it is not up to malls to be the police nor do we have any such rights.

If indeed, the HIDE information reports that families are meeting up at malls during festive events, we would assume this is for purchase of essentials, takeaway meals and/or shopping since sit-down meals and dine-ins are strictly not permitted.

We should treat the situation at the source ie for the rakyat to stay at home and not make the venue, the malls, suffer any punishment for any inadvertent outings by the rakyat.

As such, we feel totally aggrieved by the way HIDE is used to stigmatise the malls especially when the malls have immediately and diligently rearranged the gate-keeping process to ensure that the MySejahtera system accurately records the information and that the data collected when used by the HIDE system is not distorted. We believe the Minister may have been mis-informed of the real situation and will not penalize the malls due to no fault of the malls.

Malls' Enhanced Adherence to SOPs

We wish to emphasise and reiterate that the safety of shoppers is top priority at shopping malls and with all required SOPs in place including the augmented entry requirements as abovementioned, enhanced and regular cleaning and sanitisation measures, malls are safe places to visit.

Appeal for Clear Information

Having said that, we are again appealing for consultation to be conducted with industry stakeholders to arrive at practical and effective SOPs and policies to avoid unnecessary mis-information and further unwarranted and unfair negative impact for the industry.

It is to be noted that malls and retailers serve an essential role in the supply and economic chain of our country's economy and we continue to advocate that both **LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS matter.**

Thank you.