

Fortress notes uptick in demand for goods at stores

Shoppers slowly began returning to shopping centres and malls after lockdown restrictions were eased slightly on 1 May and mall owner Fortress expects activity to pick up even further as the country moves to Level 3 lockdown from June.



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“This is a welcome relief for the economy and those parts of the retail sector which were not able to trade due to lockdown restrictions. Shop owners and landlords are sensitive to the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic and have shown immense effort to ensure the safety and health of shoppers remains their priority,” says Vuso Majija, head of retail property at Fortress.



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Precautions to limit infections

“Among other actions being taken, first and foremost, we have stepped up our hygiene and safety by cleaning more frequently and focusing on high-traffic and high-touch areas within our centres. We are also focusing on the wellbeing of our onsite staff by ensuring that we have the correct PPE and sanitisers in place,” says Majija.

“It’s early days yet, but it is very encouraging to visit shopping centres and see that most people have face masks and are willing to work together with centre management to adhere to social distancing procedures. I think that these measures are the first steps in assuring shoppers that it’s safe to visit the centres.”



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Some tenants remain shut

Even under Level 3, restaurants, bars, gyms, hair and beauty salons are among the stores which will remain shut.

“As landlords, we must embrace this and explore options that bring convenience and safety to shoppers. We can already see that home deliveries for fast food operators and restaurants, for instance, is gaining momentum during this lockdown. I think this trend will continue and may offer opportunities for retailers and landlords to collaborate across different retail channels,” Majija says.

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