

BB Plaza exudes a certain charm

BB Plaza in Jalan Bukit Bintang has been a part of Kuala Lumpur's landscape for decades.

When it was announced that it would not be demolished to make way for a My Rapid Transit (MRT) station, as reported earlier, the tenants were not the only ones who heaved a sigh of relief.

However, the sidewalk cafe operators in front of the plaza had to move to make way for the underground BB Sentral monorail station.

As much as city folk would like to have the MRT integrated into the monorail station, many of us would have been sad if BB Plaza had to be demolished. Maybe a refurbishment is what the 33-year-old building needs so that it will fit in nicely with the coming MRT services.

I have heard my friends describe BB Plaza as "iconic" on more than one occasion. A friend told me that it was where she got her first local brand Vincci shoes in the 1980s. (The brand was launched in 1981).



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When I visited BB Plaza recently, I was reminded of the first time I came to the city some 14 years ago. I came to Kuala Lumpur after finishing my Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examinations and had the chance to write briefly at the now defunct *Youth Quake* (one of pullouts in the *New Straits Times* during the broadsheet era).

I was a *kampung* girl trying to fit in and one of the ways, it seemed, was to set foot in the golden triangle where BB Plaza is located.

I remember walking from Puduraya (now Pudu Sentral) to Bukit Bintang and visiting some of the

landmarks, including Lot 10, Sungei Wang Plaza and Low Yat Plaza. Hailing a cab from Puduraya for a short distance seemed ridiculous to me.

At the time, the only thing I had in mind was to see what the city had to offer and what was in store at the shopping plazas. I wanted affordable, exciting and up-to-date clothing. BB Plaza was one of "the" places to go to. I was awed by the passersby, mostly in their teens, who wore different styles of apparel.

Mid Valley Megamall wasn't around at the time.

After all these years, it was the same things that I looked for when I was in BB Plaza recently. I decided to check out an outlet that seemed to be more popular than the others, judging by the crowd.

After much deliberation and jostling, I took two T-shirts off the shelves and headed to the fitting rooms. A worker said "you can't try those on" in Bahasa Malaysia as I

noticed a signage that read "no fitting for items RM17 and below" on the door.

There was this "what do you expect" look on her face. Under normal circumstances, I would have put the clothes down and walked off. But, I bought the shirts.

My friend and I then entered an outlet selling printed T-shirts and blouses from Thailand. As I was browsing, I overheard a woman conversing in Thai over the phone.

When we had dinner at a fastfood chain on the lower ground floor, a worker reminded me not to place my mobile phone on the table.

Some things may have changed but BB Plaza retains a certain charm that I find hard to describe.

As I walked to my car at the rooftop car park, I could see the beautiful night scenery laid out before me. Pavilion seemed to be in the grasp of my hand, and I realised how lucky I was to have been there.