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A few people turn up for services despite day off

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Except for a disappointed few who turned up at government offices today, the idea of a holiday on the first Saturday of the month was well accepted by the public.

Checks at several government departments revealed that except for a few, all were closed.

The idea of the first Saturday off for civil servants was proposed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his 1999 Budget presentation in October.

In States where Sunday is a weekly holiday, the first Saturday of each month will be an extra day off, while those which observe Friday as a holiday, the extra day off will be the first Thursday of each month.

At the Damansara Town Centre, which houses several ministries and the Immigration Department, only a few people were seen and most of them were students from a private college in the vicinity.

The only commercial outlet which was doing its normal business was a fast-food restaurant, a favourite among the students. Almost all the shops at the basement bazaar were closed.

Security guard Ngatiran Ali said the place was quiet since morning, except for a few people who turned up for services from some departments as they did not know they were closed.

"Some turned up early at the Immigration Department, but left when I informed them of the closure," he said.

Business consultant Tony Moses, one of those who turned up at the Immigration Department to get some forms, said the authorities should have made the announcement more clearly through the media.

Traffic in the area was also very light with buses and taxis seen only at long intervals.

Taxi driver D. Sivam, a regular in the area, said he would ply other routes today.

"This day off is bad for us who are the regulars here. On normal days, the taxi lanes in this area will be packed with 30 to 40 taxis at any one time during office hours," he said.

The situation was the same at the government buildings in Jalan Duta with hardly any bus or taxi plying the route.

A check at the Damansara and Jalan Duta toll plazas also showed a low volume of traffic.

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