



SELANGOR JOURNAL

Milestones and big strides

Although a recession and higher prices are on the horizon for 2023, Selangor showed financial strength in 2022, suggesting it is ready to confront the challenges that lie ahead. The state's revenues reached RM2.5 billion as of Dec 23, well above the RM2.05 billion projection for the year. The amount collected in taxes is 112 per cent higher than the goal set, and it will be distributed to the people to ensure the continued success of the state. Selangor also racked up about RM10 billion in investments by the third quarter of 2022, pushing towards the government forecast of RM12 billion.

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Long-term plans for seniors

By ZAREEF MUZAMMIL

GOMBAK - The Selangor government has begun to formulate a specific development policy for seniors aged 60 and above.

Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari said the effort is in line with an increase in the life expectancy of the

people, particularly those aged 65 to 78 years, especially women.

"There is a need to formulate a policy for this group. Perhaps to develop a centre for the elderly, like how a kindergarten accommodates children.

"In some European countries, centres for the elderly are paired with kin-

dergartens, where the seniors can care for their grandchildren. So, this is one of our plans," he said during a meetup with the residents of Pendidik Keramat Permai Village AU1C in Hulu Klang, here on Dec 13.

The Gombak member of parliament also voiced concerns about Selangor's

low birth rate.

"Our birth rate per family is 1.9 per cent, lower than two per cent. In the coming years, the number of active working people will decrease.

"But the elderly have a longer life expectancy. This is one of the challenges we have to deal with," he added.

Traders can aim high with state backing

KLANG - The Selangor Digital Entrepreneur Roadshow 2022, organised by the Selangor Information Technology and Digital Economy Corporation (Sidec), aims to help the state achieve its smart economy goal, which is one of the four key agendas of the Smart Selangor initiative.

Selangor aspires to become a smart and sustainable state in the Asean region by 2025.

"The roadshow aids Selangor in achieving its goal of becoming a smart state, given that digitalisation is a need and Sidec as the organiser helps in bringing the transformation (of entrepreneurs) to a higher and more competitive level," said state executive councillor for investment Dato' Teng Chang Khim in his speech during the launch of the fifth series of the roadshow, here on Dec 10.

"Entrepreneurs who take part in this programme are given the knowledge and guidance they need to meet the challenges of Covid-19 and to ensure that business is more productive and keeps improving," he added.

Also present was Sidec chief executive officer Yong Kai Ping (pic).

The final series of roadshows in Klang brings together industry partners such as Shopee, Lazada, Touch 'n Go eWallet, Hijrah Selangor, Epic Unicorn, TikTok Shop, Grab and Sprii Commerce.

A total of 750 participants had taken part in the previous four series in Gombak, Hulu Selangor, Petaling and Kuala Selangor.

Teng said he advised the participants to enhance the quality of their

products in order to try and enter the global market.

"The state government will continue to provide platforms that connect local and foreign entrepreneurs, such as hosting the trade fair and the Selangor International Business Summit (SIBS).

"Some may think their products are not good enough for the global market. But with continued commitment and the desire to become a successful trader internationally, it is definitely achievable," he said when met after the launch.

Teng said that among the steps to improve product quality is to ensure that packaging and content meet the required standards.

"It is important to have knowledge

in growing their business in the e-commerce sector. The entrepreneurs should also be willing to make the necessary upgrades to join the SIBS trade show as it is a business-to-business platform.

"With such improvements, they can then look into other initiatives (offered by the state) such as the Hijrah loan assistance, which can help them expand," he said.

On Dec 6, Teng announced that the four-day SIBS 2022 recorded the highest ever in potential negotiated sales with a total of RM1.45 billion, compared to the previous edition's RM217.6 million.

Other successful state-organised entrepreneurial events were the Selangor Industrial Park Expo, which recorded RM1.2 billion in potential sales, and the Selangor International Expo (Food and Beverages), which recorded RM171 million in potential sales.



State GLCs awarded for excellent service

SEPANG - Three Selangor government-linked companies (GLCs) have won the International Business Review (IBR) Asean Awards 2022 following their outstanding service.

KDEB Waste Management (KDEBWM) topped the category for corporate excellence in the utility sector for smart waste management, the Selangor State Development Corporation (PKNS) for government service delivery in the property sector for affordable homes, and Tourism Selangor for government service delivery in the tourism sector for tourism promotion strategy.

The awards were presented to the winners in the presence of Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg at a gala dinner at the Sama-Sama Hotel, here on Dec 9.

State executive councillor for local government Ng Sze Han, who was also honoured as one of the award presenters, said that the achievement would inspire the state GLCs to work even harder to meet the demands of the Selangor people.

"The state government is incredibly proud of this recognition. This is a great acknowledgement of our efforts," he said.

Thirteen more awards were also given to outstanding organisations in the public and private sectors.

Meanwhile, KDEBWM managing director Dato' Ramli Mohd Tahir said that the achievement would boost the state agency and its nearly 11,000 employees to deliver the best service in the future.

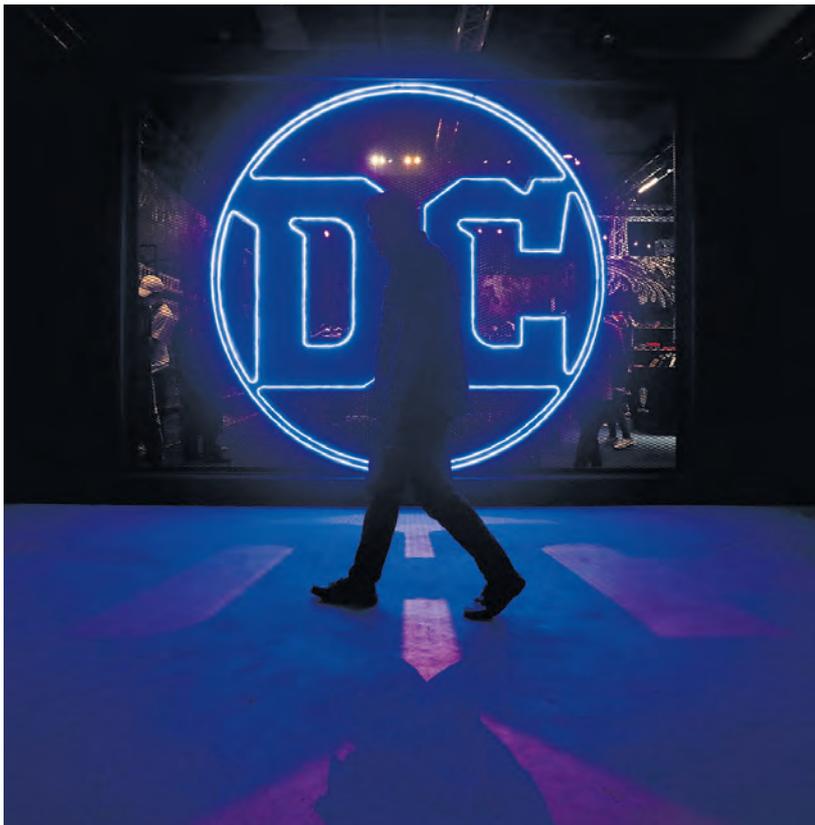
"We are the biggest organisation that manages garbage and solid waste, and this demonstrates our dedication. This success serves as a motivation for us as we prepare to face other situations after the Covid-19 pandemic and floods.

"Illegal waste dumping and high waste collection are other problems we face. After this, we are determined to strengthen our operating system to enable regular garbage collection," he said.

In 2020, KDEBWM also won the same award, together with Kumpulan Semesta Sdn Bhd for corporate excellence in the main sector of the transformative and sustainable mining management category, and Smart Selangor Delivery Unit for the delivery of government services in the development of a smart state.



Russian ambassador to Malaysia Naiyl Latypov hands the award to Ramli at the event on Dec 9



DC exhibition chooses Selangor

PETALING JAYA - Selangor was chosen to be the host for the first DC exhibition in Southeast Asia due to its vast potential and numerous facilities, said Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari.

He said the organiser, WOW Event Asia, was confident the good transport connectivity in the state would attract visitors to the exhibition.

The exhibition, themed 'The World of DC', opened on Dec 23, 2022 and will last until April 1, 2023. It will provide opportunities for domestic tourism, especially in the retail and hotel sectors.

"I am proud this exhibition is the first in Asia. Various attractions and facilities were among the factors Selangor was chosen as the host. We expect this exhibition to draw around 200,000 visitors.

"We are confident the total number of visitors will exceed the initial target, especially since the superhero characters like Batman and Superman have their own fanbase," Amirudin said after launching the event at the Tropicana Gardens Mall here on Dec 23.

Meanwhile, he said tourist arrivals to Selangor continue to increase after the country opened its borders in July last year.

"Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Selangor was the top destination for tourists who wanted to visit theme parks, hotels, shopping centres and enjoy ecotourism," Amirudin said.

RM2.5b revenue exceeds target

SHAH ALAM - Selangor has recorded revenue of RM2.5 billion as of Dec 23, which surpassed the estimated figure of RM2.05 billion set for this year.

Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari said in an infographic shared on Twitter that the revenue collection recorded is 112 per cent more than the projected target.

He said that the revenue collected would be returned back to the people to ensure that Selangor continues to prosper.

"Alhamdulillah (Thank God), thanks to careful planning, the Selangor state economy remains robust and sustainable," he

said on Dec 24.

When tabling the 2023 Budget on Nov 25, Amirudin said the careful expenditure approach resulted in a RM261.24 million surplus for the state's finances.

He said with the state's reserves of RM3.29 billion via the state government's Consolidated Fund as of Nov 24, the state's financial position has been improving.

In 2021, the total state revenue was RM2.284 billion, with RM627.19 million from recorded tax revenue, RM1.437 billion from non-tax revenue and RM219.89 million from non-revenue receipts.

Positive sign as investments near RM10b in Q3

By **NASUHA BADRUL HUZAINI**

SHAH ALAM - As of the third quarter of 2022, the Selangor government has recorded nearly RM10 billion in investments, says state executive councillor for investment, industry and trade Dato' Teng Chang Khim.

He said the investments derived from various sectors including manufacturing, food and beverages, electrical and electronics, fabricated metal products, and food manufacturing.

"I expect the total investment recorded in Selangor to reach RM12 billion in 2022," he said at a press conference after announcing the achievement of the Selangor Aviation Show 2022 and the Selangor International Business Summit 2022, here on Dec 6.

Teng added that the state received more investments in 2022 than in 2021.

"Last year was a rather bad year because even after the enforcement of the movement control order was lifted, most of the international borders remained closed. It was impossible to conduct physical meetings and transactions, thus causing a drastic fall in direct foreign investments.

"Even though we have yet to bounce back to the pre-2020 situation, the state's economy is picking up," he said.

During the tabling of the 2023 Selangor Budget on Nov 25, Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari announced that Selangor had approved a total of 118 manufacturing projects, higher than any other state, with a total investment of RM4.88 billion.

Selangor was said to be chosen due to its strategic location, port facilities and highway networks.

Biz expo, airshow now key regional events: Exco

SHAH ALAM - Two major events hosted by the Selangor government in 2022, namely the Selangor Aviation Show (SAS 2022) and the Selangor International Business Summit (SIBS 2022), have served as important international platforms for businesses in the region.

State executive councillor for investment, trade and industry Dato' Teng Chang Khim said following the favourable response received for both events, the expectations for their future instalments have been set higher.

"The SAS 2022 has soared beyond expectations with a total crowd of 10,563, surpassing the initial target of 8,000. As for SIBS 2022, it also surpassed the initial target of 30,000 visitors with a turn-

out of 44,342 visitors.

"Given the encouraging figures, they would be able to attract more participants in the future, either as exhibitors, buyers or those who want to look for business matching sessions. I believe both events will be regarded as important international platforms in the region," he said at a press conference after the SAS 2022 and SIBS 2022 post-event announcement, here on Dec 6.

The SAS 2022 successfully recorded RM1.174 billion in potential transaction value during its three-day run, during which it assembled 62 exhibitors from five countries representing the world's best in aerospace and aviation.

It also featured 30 static aircraft, almost

double the number of last year's show.

The second instalment of the state's aviation show also saw some 14 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on various aerospace industry subsector collaborations signed.

The agreements cover collaborations such as research and development for the aerospace industry, dual licence and Air Transport Pilot training, a one-stop MRO centre for drones and the maintenance of amphibious aircraft.

Meanwhile, SIBS 2022 recorded the highest potential negotiated sales with a total of RM1.45 billion, compared to the previous edition's RM217.6 million.

Teng said the event saw seven MoUs inked on various industry subsector col-

laborations.

"The biggest MoU signed during the summit was between CSCM Asset Management Sdn Bhd and Harum Minat Sdn Bhd on the joint development of the International Integrated Logistics Services (IILS) in Sepang, which focuses on the construction of overseas warehouses and a smart logistics park around the Kuala Lumpur International Airport that will adopt an advanced and comprehensive logistics development system from China.

"The IILS is a key project under China's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative, with the first phase slated to kickstart in January 2023 with RM820 million in estimated investments," he added.



When politicians rise to the call

By IDA NADIRAH IBRAHIM

The Malaysian political landscape in 2022 saw a turn of events that brought many firsts to the nation, setting a new course for the country's future.

The outcome of the 15th general election (GE15) on Nov 19 resulted in a hung parliament where no coalition won a simple majority to form government. This set a precedent whereby a new political alliance was formed between once-opposing coalitions through the signing of a memorandum of understanding.

With the backing of 148 members of parliament, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim became the first prime minister in Malaysia to have a two-thirds majority in the Lower House in nearly 20 years.

Whether the formation of the new Federal government, also dubbed the unity government, meets the expectations of all, it reflects the development of democracy in the country.

The recent turn of events, said Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Isis) Malaysia senior fellow Eddin Khoo, shows a positive development for Malaysia's democracy as it reflects a general trend of democratic maturity developing since 1999. He



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MARKETING & ADVERTISING:
 Nadhrah Azlan nadhrah@mediaselangor.com
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PHOTOGRAPHER: Zakki Jilan, Hafiz Othman,
 Raheemie Arifin & Fikri Yusof

GRAPHIC & LAYOUT: Graphics Department MSSB

Level 11, Menara Bank Rakyat, No. 1, Jalan Indah 14/8,
 Seksyen 14, 40000 Shah Alam, Selangor
 Tel : 03-5523 4856 Fax : 03-5523 5856 Email: info@mediaselangor.com

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said when people are more autonomous, it leads to them becoming more politically engaged.

"It's a real test and a real challenge for our elected representatives because they have put the people's interest at heart and not their personal or party interest. This is inevitable because everybody expected a hung parliament, and we got a hung parliament. So now we have parties who have to work together for the betterment of the nation.

"What is most important for the elected representatives is that they are facing current developments which is the evolution of our democracy, therefore our parliamentarians have to rise up to the occasion.

"I think we will look towards this kind of government further in the future and we must also

remember that this is a new coalition of parties. Although we have always been a coalition-based administration because Barisan Nasional (BN) and Pakatan Harapan (Harapan) are coalitions on its own, we are now taking it one step further," he told *Selangor Journal* when contacted recently.

Despite initial scepticism and criticism, the current government led by Anwar is seen to have set its priorities straight after a month in office. It is a unique situation where a coalition of coalitions — Harapan, BN, and Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) — is collaborating to make things work.

According to Khoo, the administration has shown that it was prioritising and addressing the correct issues in the final month of 2022.

"But that is only the first step. The second step is facilitating everything that they said they would

do. When you put the expectations of the people at the heart of your government, that is the right way to go.”

Meanwhile, Ilham Centre fellow researcher Mujibu Abd Muis has said while the direction of the current government seems clear, the central government is still looking for common ground within the coalitions.

“The focus seems okay as Anwar as prime minister seems to stand his ground, possibly due to his leadership charisma and experience, so he seems more convincing and able to lead his team in the coalition government.

“In terms of performance, they seem to be doing well, for example, Anthony Loke (Transport Minister) seems to be moving forward, while the others have got off to a promising start, and we may start to see results in the following months,” he said when contacted recently.

Common ground

With the hung parliament in GE15, Mujibu said that people must understand that the political landscape in Malaysia makes it difficult for one coalition to be standing on its own and, whether they like it or not, would have to find a common ground and be flexible to cooperate with one another without having to entirely disregard each's central political stance.

“Those in the government must perform. Failure to do so would be seen as a failure to work together and would give both a direct and indirect impact to the political parties that are part of the government,” he said.

As for Khoo, he said the government's multiethnic and multireligious makeup and commitment to upholding the Federal Constitution are the most crucial aspects of its task in representing Malaysia.

This includes aspects of the special position of the

Malays, Islam as the official religion of the country, and establishing the monarchy as the overarching authority of the administration.

While Khoo expressed unease over some of the rhetoric raised in the recent polls, he said the current opposition Perikatan Nasional (PN) has emerged as a significant force in Malaysian politics and should be able to pressure those in the administration to perform their very best.

“Everyone has to get serious and what we have to focus on are policies that benefit the country as a whole because the government needs to ensure that it remains competitive and appealing.

“Everybody across party lines talks about the economy but the economy today requires imaginative thinking. You can't just think the sky will open and money will fall on this country because investors have a lot of other choices.”

Khoo said what is needed is a dramatic refocusing of Malaysia's economic priorities and a guarantee that the nation's economic decline would not be accelerated by clinging to failed policies of the past.

He said the government should move on from discussions on how to boost the economy as the people are more interested in seeing

how they intend to achieve lifting the economy from the doldrums.

A show of force

For the first time in the nation's history, a majority of states chose not to participate in the general election this GE15. While Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Penang chose not to dissolve their legislatures before their terms end in 2023, the states of Sabah, Sarawak, Johor, and Melaka did not do so because their periods had not yet achieved maturity.

Khoo said the determinants of the upcoming state

Important dates of political events in 2022

- **Jan 22:** Dissolution of the Johor State Legislative Assembly
- **March 12:** Johor state election takes place. BN wins 40 seats, Harapan (13), PN (3)
- **Oct 10:** Dissolution of the Dewan Rakyat
- **Nov 19:** GE15 is held. Harapan wins 82 seats, PN and PAS (74), BN (30), GPS (23), GRS (6), Parti Warisan Sabah (3), Independents (2), PBM (1) and PKDM (1)
- **Nov 21:** Anwar negotiates with political parties to form a Federal government
- **Nov 22:** Anwar, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Tan Sri Abdul Hadi Awang are granted an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong at Istana Negara
- **Nov 23:** Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof are granted an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong at Istana Negara
- **Nov 24:** His Majesty holds a special meeting with the Malay Rulers. Anwar takes his oath of office as prime minister before the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on the same day
- **Dec 2:** Anwar announces his cabinet lineup of 28 ministers
- **Dec 19:** Anwar garners a two-thirds majority in the Lower House and the confidence vote of 148 members of parliament during the first meeting of the first session of the 15th Parliament

elections in 2023, namely Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Penang, would depend on how the current government is perceived.

“Six months down the line, if after 100 days people see no action and a lot of talk, if they see this government disrupted by personal animosity and such, then the states are going to suffer.

“But if they are seen to be able to deliver, I would caution PN from being too sure even about Kelantan and Terengganu. Because as the flooding has proved, essentially, the state administrations on the east coast are still very weak and depend very much on the central government in addressing a disaster like this.

“Any state is up for grabs. From now on for Malaysia's elections, everything is up for grabs, nobody can be sure about winning.”

As to whether Harapan and BN would be officially contesting together in upcoming state elections, Mujibu opined that it would be highly dependent on public perception towards the Federal government, as well as on whether Umno can convince its grassroots to do so.

“If we look at the last two elections in Padang Serai and Tioman, we see that Harapan had given way to BN in Tioman, while BN had done the same with Harapan in Padang Serai. Based on the trends in GE15, it is evident that had Harapan and BN combined, several seats would have been won and PN beaten.

“But with the current sentiments, this would be difficult and perhaps the parties would only unofficially work together as how they did in Tioman and Padang Serai.”

It's a real test and a real challenge for our elected representatives because they have put the people's interest at heart and not their personal or party interest. This is inevitable because everybody expected a hung parliament, and we got a hung parliament. So now we have parties who have to work together for the betterment of the nation





Steering through the economic gloom

By **SULYN CHONG**

SHAH ALAM - 2023 has arrived but with more challenges to be fought as Malaysia's and much of the world's economy is predicted to stall, with a projection of slower-than-expected growth.

The Ministry of Finance (MOF) on Oct 7 released its Economic Outlook 2023 report which predicted that both advanced economies as well as emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs) will see an expansion of about 2.9 per cent in 2023, reported *Bernama*.

This is both in lieu of weak private consumption and economic inflation expected to hit worldwide this year.

"While advanced economies' growth is expected to moderate further to 1.4 per cent, EMDEs' growth is forecasted to be marginally higher by 3.9 per cent as it is bolstered by higher private consumption and exports," said the report.

On a more micro level, Asean-5 economies, which include Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines, are forecasted to increase by 5.1 per cent, assisted mostly by increased domestic consumption and private investments.

As for global trade, the ministry reported that the sector would see a 3.2 per cent growth in 2023 due to weaker demand, with advanced economies said to record a growth of 3.2 per cent, while EMDEs will see 3.3 per cent.

"Both exports and imports for advanced economies and EMDEs are expected to grow at a slower rate of between 3.6 per cent to 4.8 per cent owing to unwanted extended supply chain disruptions," it said.

Furthermore, MOF also reported that global inflation for 2023 is predicted to register at 5.7 per cent, a considerably lower rate than for 2022, which is reported to record at 8.3 per cent.

"However, inflation in advanced economies is an-

anticipated to record at 3.3 per cent while EMDEs at 7.3 per cent," said the ministry.

TA Securities Research is in agreement with MOF's assessments and puts the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) at a low 2 to 3 per cent growth for 2023 in a worst-case scenario expectation, reported *The Edge Markets*.

"Exports are expected to slow significantly next year (2023), reflecting the dampening effects of weaker global demand, easing of energy and commodity prices, and high base effects.

"Furthermore, a gradual normalisation in our domestic interest rate (along with major central banks globally), persistent high cost of living and inflation would crimp consumer spending power," it said.

However, with lower unemployment rates of 3.5 to 3.7 per cent, TA Securities projects real GDP to grow moderately by 4.5 per cent, but it is a far cry from the 7.5 per cent projected growth for 2022.

Malaysia MOF's prediction for the global economy this year may seem conservative, but it is a much better outlook than the International Monetary Fund's which puts global growth figures at only 2.7 per cent as previously reported.

However, Bank Negara Malaysia has generously put expectations at a range of 4 to 5 per cent, a prediction that is said to be still quite an uphill climb for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who is also the newly minted Finance Minister.

Shahkaran Nambiar, an economist at the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research, said in an opinion

“

MOF reported that global inflation for 2023 is predicted to register at 5.7 per cent, a considerably lower rate than for 2022, which is reported to record at 8.3 per cent

piece that he believes Anwar is the right man for the job even with such a bleak outlook for the coming year.

"With his tremendous experience and intellect, we have the best possible candidate in Anwar to take us through the hurdles that will come up as the global economy goes through difficult times," he said.

Shahkaran's belief is supported by Anwar's positive sentiment which is buoyed by the promising economic performance at the end of 2022, following the year's re-opening of the economy and lower unemployment rates in the nation.

Although it would be a tough hurdle for Malaysia's 10th Prime

Minister to navigate, Anwar, when presenting the Consolidated Fund (Expenditure) Bill 2022 and the Temporary Development Expenditure Budget 2023 in the Dewan Rakyat on Dec 20, expressed his confidence that the Federal administration would sail through as long as everyone works together.

He said that all parties would need to be with the government in formulating a comprehensive approach, including the super-rich and conglomerates who he said have reaped huge profits following the rise in commodity prices.

Anwar stated that government subsidies must also contribute towards the wellbeing of the people, especially the B40 and M40 groups and small traders.

In addition, the government is said to be confident it would be able to improve economic indicators, regain investor confidence, and rebuild Malaysia.

Appliance maker takes home top prize

By **SULYN CHONG**

KUALA LUMPUR - Small appliance manufacturer Samu Giken Malaysia Sdn Bhd has emerged as the champion of the Malaysia Top E-Commerce Merchant (Top ECM) Awards 2022, taking home a RM12,000 cash prize, a trophy and a certificate.

Its managing director Sam Chai was ecstatic after the win, stating it is an honour to be recognised for their efforts.

"I did not expect to win because we only started this year, after the movement control order, and sales were actually decreasing. We were actually struggling and even had to sell our products physically instead of online.

"Fortunately, we were able to learn new business models from this programme, which was possibly the key that helped us in boosting our online sales," he said after the awards ceremony at Mandarin Oriental Hotel, here on Dec 17.

The 2022 Top ECM awards ceremony is the seventh edition organised by the Selangor Information Technology and Digital Economy Corporation (Sidec), with Affin Bank Berhad as the main sponsor for the fourth consecutive year.

The event also saw rubber slipper

company Fipper Marketing Sdn Bhd and Apple-specific phone accessories company Global Synergy Concepts Sdn Bhd coming in second and third place, as well as receiving RM10,000 and RM8,000 in cash respectively, alongside their trophies and certificates.

Fipper's digital marketing manager Fadila Aziz said it was surprising to have won second place as this year's competition saw many brands participating.

"We understand this year's competition is intense as there were many other brands that took part, thus, we did not expect to win. But perhaps, this is our *rezeki* (fortune) for this year and we are very happy with it.

"We would definitely recommend all up-and-coming brands to participate in this competition, as it really helps provide the best platform to expand your business reach," she said.

As for Global Synergy Concepts e-commerce manager Mickey Hia, she said it was exciting to have won but believes they can do better in next year's competition.

"This is our first time joining the awards, so for next year, we plan to do better by setting higher targets. Hopefully, we can either attain the second place or even the champion title," she said.

This year's Top ECM saw the biggest

number of submissions since its first edition, with 440 applications, a 106.6 per cent increase from last year's record of 213 submissions.

The awards this year also saw a generation of RM58.9 million in sales, with over 427,643 orders, an increase of 25.3 per cent from 2021.

Sidec chief executive officer Yong Kai Ping said the consistent improvement in the number of applications indicates a continuous growth of the e-commerce industry.

"We hope to maintain this momentum in every aspect in order to continue to uphold the industry standards," he said during his welcoming speech.

Also present was state executive councillor for industry and trade Dato' Teng Chang Khim, who said this year's participants came from various states including Selangor, Penang, Johor, and Negeri Sembilan.

"As Selangor prepares to position itself as Asean's digital hub, the award has showcased how it caters to national-level participants and manages to attract the interest of hundreds of e-merchants to compete in Top ECM," he said.

Teng added the state government through Sidec has been promoting and recognising the e-commerce industry

and its merchants.

"Seeing the shifting and shaping of consumer behaviour by the pandemic, I am proud to witness the growth of the e-commerce industry in Malaysia as many e-merchants have displayed resilience and eagerness to adopt new technologies to future-proof their businesses.

"In fact, it has become a catalyst to sharpen business continuity measures, which will further accelerate the digitalisation of small and medium enterprises (SME) and micro-SMEs," he said.

All participating e-merchants were judged based on three criteria, namely Online Sales Contest (50 per cent), Livestream Contest (25 per cent) and Business Potential (25 per cent), with this year's Top ECM presided over by a panel of seven respected individuals from the e-commerce industry.

Meanwhile, the fourth to tenth place winners brought home RM3,000 in cash each, as well as trophies and certificates.

Special awards were also given out, namely the Selangor E-Commerce Merchant Awards, the Affin Bank Rising Star Awards and the Affingem Women Trailblazer Awards, which saw three winners in each category taking home certificates and cash prizes.



(From left) Yong and Teng hand over the mock cheque and trophy to Chai at the awards ceremony on Dec 17

Inaction in the face of any crisis is damaging but a rash response too, can be foolhardy. As forecasts of a financial slowdown in 2023 circulate, raising anxieties among governments worldwide who scramble for contingency plans, Selangor will bank on a carefully thought-out blueprint, the First Selangor Plan (RS-1), to weather the coming days.

Downturns mean tough times but they also offer a rare opportunity to test the strength of the most resilient economies. The best governments do more than survive a downturn. They position themselves to thrive before things get difficult.

The RS-1 was formulated to do precisely this. It is a comprehensive plan that is both defensive and offensive, taking on the philosophy that to do nothing is dangerous. The Selangor government believes that to safeguard livelihoods and the state's coffers, it needs to invest in the future — by protecting its people and expanding its industries.

Seizing the slowdown

On July 27, 2022, Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari unveiled the five-year plan he envisioned would pave the way for the state's long-term success. The plan focused on four areas: economic growth, empowerment of the people, sustainable development, as well as good and transparent governance.

These four areas would be developed through 262 projects and initiatives, of which 20 are deemed as game changers. Together, they cost RM212.44 billion, with the money coming from the state government, its subsidiaries, and private funding.

Amirudin told the state assembly sitting when he presented RS-1 for the first time that the principal targets to be achieved by 2025 are to have 6.5 to 7.0 per cent of GDP growth each year; to have approved investments for main and sophisticated sectors that amount to between RM25 billion and RM35 billion each year; and to create employment opportunities for between 3.5 and 3.8 million people, equivalent to about 97 per cent of the total labour force in Selangor.

These targets are among 14 macro indicators (see table) to be used as a yardstick for success.

"The state government is committed to contributing 30 per cent of the country's GDP

Bold steps forward with RS-1

by 2025 and at the same time create a 'golden balance' between economic growth and raising the standard of living for its people," the Menteri Besar said at the time.

"This would close the socioeconomic gap in Selangor and provide the people with a good quality of life, particularly in areas that are experiencing rapid urbanisation."

In 2021, Selangor's GDP contribution to Malaysia stood at 24.8 per cent, making it the largest contributing state. This means it generates nearly a quarter of the country's wealth, a position it prides itself in and does not take lightly.

Game-changer investments

Governments that make plans and seize opportunities early before markets slump and people lose jobs tend to get a headstart in recovery and are even likely to thrive. Selangor has been farsighted in its intention to create jobs to stimulate the economy.

Through the RS-1, it has adopted the concept of regional clustering. It intends to create geographically-concentrated networking hubs of businesses, service providers, and effective government institutions that work together to maximise resources, compete on larger scales, drive innovation and provide career opportunities.

Through what the administration calls the Regional Development Plan (Clusterisation), rural areas in the northern and southern parts of Selangor will be turned into new economic zones.

"To ensure an equal distribution of economic activities in Selangor, the RS-1 has identified several regions in the state that will be developed," said Amirudin on July 27.

Topping the list for transformation are the Sabak Bernam Development Area (Sabda) and the Integrated Development Region in South Selangor (Idriss).

"Idriss is an integrated private investment development in Sepang and Kuala Langat. It will be supported by incentives from both the state and Federal governments, with a gross development value of RM1 trillion, involving some 40,000 acres (approximately 16,000 hectares) of land," Amirudin said.

Selangor also remains committed to developing its agriculture sector which will be done through Sabda, stimulating economic growth in the Sabak Bernam district.

RM1.9 billion has been promised for the development of 1,317 hectares of land using the latest in agrotechnology, from which 3,600 jobs will be created. The project is expected to generate revenues of up to RM248 million a year.

The state will also strengthen its logistics sector by developing a project dubbed Carey Selangor, which will see the development of a Special

The Selangor Maritime Gateway project aims to spur sustainable social and economic growth on land along 56 kilometres of the river



Economic Zone on Carey Island.

Covering 6,000 hectares, Carey Selangor will concentrate on the three key industries of manufacturing, ports, and logistics and distribution. It will also feature commercial and recreational areas, and generate some 115,000 jobs.

Amirudin said that the economy would receive a contribution of over RM40.2 billion in gross value by 2060 from this project alone.

Another game changer under RS-1 is the Selangor Maritime Gateway project that intends to turn the Klang River into a new source of economy for the state.

The master plan reserves Klang as an Eco Smart City to spur sustainable social and economic growth on land along 56 kilometres of the river. Ongoing works there include the rehabilitation of the river itself and the building of a cultural village, a retreat resort, a mangrove point, and a grand bazaar, among others, to draw visitors from within the state and beyond.

A resilient workforce

Aside from offering jobs, the RS-1 places good importance in offering Selangor citizens good governance and welfare. Investing in people means a healthier and more harmonious population, and a stronger and better-informed workforce, providing the state long-term advantages that will help it to weather economic hiccups or storms.

The plan pays heed to the people's wellbeing through the environment, promising to lower greenhouse gas emissions, up recycling, and provide clean water to all homes.

It pays heed to the people's health by offering

free health insurance schemes, free screenings to detect a range of cancers, and assistance payments for critical illnesses like heart and kidney disease.

It does not shy away from mental illness, providing much-needed subsidies to those seeking help from professional counsellors and psychiatrists.

The plan also champions social inclusivity — it aims to create chances for everyone to generate an income, be they working mums, single parents or handicapped youths.

"RS-1 will focus on advocating for public and private employers to provide a more flexible working environment, including working from home or a hybrid working mode, to accommodate the needs of the female labour force," Amirudin said.

Independent living centres too will be set up to help young OKU learn skills to find employment.

"Youths, including those with disabilities, are Selangor's future assets," he added.

Thus, while the global economic trend remains uncertain, the state is ready to go boldly forward, armed with a blueprint to mitigate risks and capitalise on opportunities.



Selangor Saring provides vital health screenings to thousands of people in the state for free

The Selangor government believes that to safeguard livelihoods and the state's coffers, it needs to invest in the future — by protecting its people and expanding its industries



The logistics sector is rapidly expanding in Port Klang and remains as one of the state's three key industries

The 14 macro indicators of



GDP growth rate 6.5 - 7.0% a year

Investments for main sectors RM25b - RM35b a year

Broadband penetration rate 70% for every 100 premises

Total job creation for 3.5 - 3.8 million people

Median household income RM9,290 a month

Lowering absolute poverty to 0.7%

Lowering relative poverty to 11%

Family Wellbeing Index score at 8.0 scale

Lowering greenhouse gas emissions by 35%

Clean water supply daily

Increasing waste recycling rate by 15%

Completion rate for high-impact projects at 100%

National-level local council ratings at top 10 placings

Digitalisation of government services at 85%



The far-reaching potential of Budget 2023



Selangor must maintain its status as a model for other Malaysian states

Prof Saadiah Mohamad

By **NASUHA BADRUL HUZAINI**

SHAH ALAM - Selangor entered the year 2022 in a sombre mood after the state was devastated by a massive year-end flood that claimed 25 lives and displaced thousands of others.

The flooding served as a wake-up call for the state administration to be more prepared in the face of sudden disasters, in addition to keeping its commitments to its economic initiatives and welfare programmes.

Despite the easing of most Covid-19 restrictions last year, it is undeniable that the majority of the people are still recovering from the pandemic's impact, and rising living costs have further exacerbated the situation.

Many research firms have warned that this year will not be any better; in fact, the global economic downturn is expected to trigger another recession.

The Selangor government doubled up on its efforts to help alleviate the people's burdens when it tabled the 2023 Selangor Budget.

Themed '#KitaSelangor: Inspiring Progress, Strengthening Unity, Fulfill-

ing Hope', the RM2.45 billion budget was tabled by Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari during the Selangor State Legislative Assembly on Nov 25.

Amirudin said for 2023, the budget will see an estimated deficit of RM450 million, which is RM227.28 million more than the RM222.72 million deficit in 2022, due to funding for disaster management preparation and for the state's sustainable development.

Commenting on the budget, the Director of Non-Thesis Programmes at Putra Business School, Associate Professor Dr Ahmed Razman Abdul Latiff, said it demonstrates the state's commitment to welfare, especially if the economy stalls.

"Even though it is a deficit budget, the state government has expanding reserves every year which allows them to spend more than what the revenue generated.

"A clear indication of the state government's intention can be seen in higher allocations for development expenditure, which focuses on social sector development to ensure economic and social resilience among the peo-

ple," he told *Selangor Journal* recently.

New economic zones

Dr Ahmed Razman also lauded the government's focus on specialised development by zones, namely the Integrated Development Region In South Selangor (Idriss) and the Sabak Bernam Development Area (Sabda).

He said it is important that these mega projects are given strong support to ensure that the state's economic status improves in the next five years.

"The projects are also part of the First Selangor Plan (RS-1) and they will leave a significant impact on the state as a whole because the government cannot just rely on their existing economic activities. They have to continuously ensure that every part of Selangor is utilised and optimised to benefit the local population.

"Apart from that, the Selangor government should leverage the potential of logistics services and digital investment. Digital investment is crucial since the service sector contributed

59.5 per cent to the state's gross domestic product. It has the potential to bring in more revenue for the state as its adoption was accelerated due to the pandemic.

"As for logistics services, it goes hand in hand with digital investment especially when it involves trading activities," he said.

Healthier lives

The 2023 Selangor Budget has also allocated RM65.6 million for public health, out of which RM45 million has been set aside for the continuation of the Iltizam Selangor Sihat programme.

To this, Dr Ahmed Razman said it is vital that health programmes do not get discontinued.

"The health problem remains a serious one because the high cost of living reduces people's ability to maintain a quality life, which eventually affects not just their physical but mental health.

"The move by the state to contribute approximately RM1.6 million to the EPF i-Suri scheme, which will benefit 26,913 members, is also crucial to ensure that housewives are better protected in their old age.

"Studies have shown that the majority of people do not have enough savings to retire comfortably. If assistance is not provided now, there will be long-term problems where more allocations will be needed for the welfare of old folks."

Report card session

Meanwhile, a Professor (Economics) of the Business and Accountancy Faculty at Universiti Selangor, Professor Dr Saadiah Mohamad said the state administration should also focus on governance issues to ensure that its funds and investment revenues are used efficiently.

"There must be transparency on this, therefore, besides tabling the budget, there should be a presentation or report card on the accomplishments of the previous year's budget.

"If targets are not achieved, then there should be explanations to it.

"To assure people that the state can provide a report card by next year's budget tabling, baseline data must be collected. The state government must be serious in measuring the impact of state funds



and ensure that the returns from any state investment are evaluated.

"When a transparent approach is adopted, the results can be disseminated to the people, who can then make responsible decisions during elections based on the evidence-based performance of the state," she said.

Being a model state

Prof Saadiah stressed that Selangor must maintain its status as a model for other Malaysian states, and showcase its belief that there can be peaceful coexistence in a multiracial and multireligious society.

"Congratulations on the budget tabling that has further reflected Selangor's strong commitment to expanding its economy, supported by private sector investment, businesses, and its agencies.

"However, it is important to highlight the implementation and whether the allocated budget can reach its target. It is crucial that the programmes'

marketing reaches their intended audience, otherwise, good programmes might not be well received and the allocated budget not taken up," she said.

Investing in food tech

Prof Saadiah was firm about the need for more awareness programmes on food security. Education, training and investing in organic farming are all vital for the whole process to work.

"There is an increasing demand for healthy food as the recent pandemic has made people more aware of their health. There is a desire to care for one's health in natural ways, including through the use of food as natural medicine.

"Selangor can benefit from the latest research and technology to promote more high-value production, thus further enhancing the partnership between state governments, research institutes and universities," she added.

Echoing Dr Ahmed Razman, Prof Saadiah said the Iltizam Selangor Sihat should be given focus and include information about healthy living lifestyles.

"Compared to developed countries, our awareness of what a healthy lifestyle is, is still low, especially among the youth. If this matter is not managed properly, it will result in even higher incidences of diabetes, obesity and chronic illnesses.

"The government should contribute to the evidence that economic prosperity leads to better health among its citizens."

Fostering the arts

When asked about other improvements Selangor can make, Prof Saadiah said the state must look for its identity in the arts and its cultural heritage as these sectors have the potential to draw more tourists and investments.

"We should portray Selangor as an interesting and safe destination with beautiful and pleasant vibes, a liveable state where people can work and reside peacefully.

"The state government should emulate other civilised societies and offer theatre shows, cultural activities, art galleries, museums and folk music appreciation," she said.



The vital reprieve of subsidies

By IDA NADIRAH IBRAHIM

THE cost of living has become the main concern for the majority of Malaysians in 2022 due to rising inflation, and as a result, it has also become the top priority of the new unity government.

Despite the reopening of the country's borders on April 1, 2022, which saw the nation entering the "transition to endemic phase" of Covid-19, just like every other nation in the world, Malaysia continues to face challenges brought on by external factors such as the Ukraine-Russian conflict, fluctuating crude oil prices, China's economic downturn owing to stringent Covid-19 controls, and concerns about inflation.

However, the newly-formed unity government, which consists of Pakatan Harapan (Harapan), Barisan Nasional (BN) and Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS), led by Malaysia's tenth Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, is expected to rekindle public and investor confidence.

The Harapan chairman pledged that the new Federal government placed under his leadership would uphold the spirit of the Federal Constitution and safeguard the stability of the nation's economy.

Anwar is also expected to table the revised Budget 2023 on Feb 24, 2023. The budget tabled under the former Federal government on Oct 7, 2022, was the largest allocation in Malaysia's history at RM372.3 billion.

Longer-term solutions

On Dec 23, the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) revealed that the country's inflation rate stood at 4.0 per

cent in November 2022, unchanged from the month before.

According to the department, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for November 2022 was 129.0, up from 124.0 in November 2021. However, the figure does not say it all.

Similar to the global trends in inflation, food items and non-alcoholic beverages, which is the largest expenditure group for households and also among the primary cause of inflation, had increased by 7.3 per cent, while the percentage for restaurants and hotels increased slightly, from 6.8 per cent in October 2022, to 7.0 per cent, followed by transport costs at 5.0 per cent. According to Khazanah Research Institute, in low-income households (B40), transportation and food make up about two-fifths of total spending.

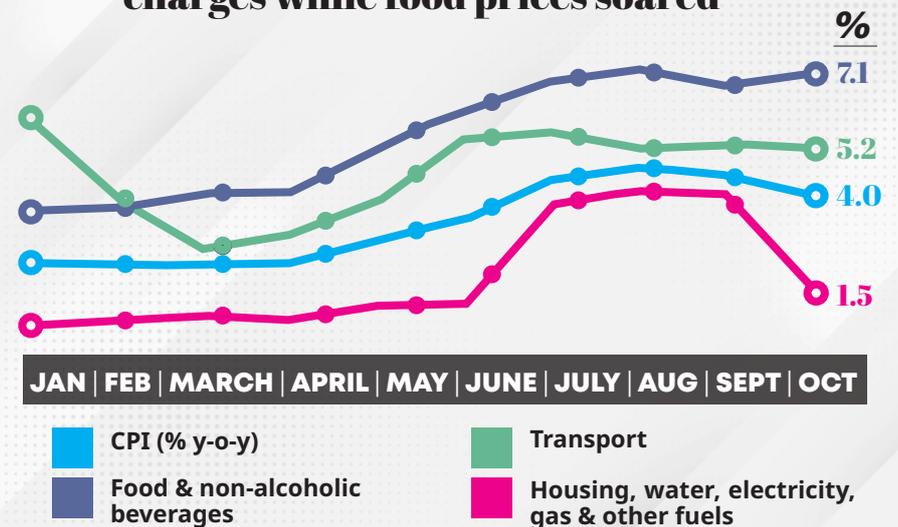
To cushion the impact, the government subsidised several food items in 2022, including chicken, eggs and cooking oil. Other key items that were subsidised include diesel, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), flour and electricity.

The close to RM80 billion in overall subsidies for this year are thought to be the highest amount ever recorded for Malaysia, which equalled almost 27 per cent of the projected RM285.2 billion in Federal government revenue.

The Federal government is making further steps, such as establishing a more focused electricity usage subsidy mechanism which would see higher surcharges imposed on high voltage users, such as exporters and corporations. At the same time, households, small businesses and certain food manufacturing and agricultural groups would continue receiving a subsidy.



2022 saw capped transport and utility charges while food prices soared



DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS MALAYSIA

Additionally, Anwar had said that the previous administration's efforts to provide cash handouts to the most underprivileged group will continue, with the first phase involving RM2 billion for nine million individuals.

In an effort to help control inflation in the future, the unity government on Dec 23 said that it would develop an ecosystem based on pricing data from all over the country to inject price elasticity and supply.

Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli said that the ecosystem, which will be formed in a month, will be created and led by the users themselves as it would help enhance flexibility on the demand side.

Rafizi added that as a step to lessen the effect of targeted subsidies on the populace, the government would look into devising a mechanism that would allow subsidies to be dispersed evenly to eligible recipients.

Government intervention

Aside from continued efforts from the central administration, Selangor has also stepped up to address the cost of living and has formulated several initiatives within its means to ease the load on its citizens.

The state administration introduced the Jelajah Ehsan Rakyat (JER), a roadshow selling affordable basic necessities in the state, which was originally slated to run until Dec 31.

On Dec 29, Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari unveiled that the programme had recorded RM19.65 million in total sales with a total subsidy of RM6.16 million, benefitting some two million people in Selangor.

On Aug 30, Amirudin announced an additional RM10 million for the pro-

gramme to continue under JER in the 56 state constituencies from Aug 31 to Dec 31.

To address the continued increase in the prices of goods, Amirudin stated that the roadshow conducted by the Selangor Agricultural Development Corporation (PKPS) will continue until March 2023 and resume as early as mid-January next year on a larger scale with the cooperation of several relevant ministries and agencies.

Amirudin said next year, JER would be held in collaboration with the Federal government through the KPDN, the Agriculture and Food Security Ministry, and the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (Fama), with the assistance of Selangor Warga Hijrah Berhad (Kohijrah) cooperative.

It is estimated that the government would spend between RM10 million and RM15 million within the three-month period before the efforts and price controls enforced by the Federal government show results.

The Menteri Besar further stated that he will carefully review the list of suitable items. He said with additional items being sold at the JER programme next year, some 800,000 to one million buyers will be able to take advantage of its benefits.

The programme focuses on offering six basic items, namely chicken, beef, fish, chicken eggs, rice and cooking oil and is also set to offer several other food items such as bread to meet public demand.

In previously instalments, JER offered whole standard chickens priced at RM10 each, fresh solid beef at RM10 a pack, grade B chicken eggs at RM10 a tray, alongside mackerel and sardines at RM6 a pack, 5 kg cooking oil at RM25 and 5 kg packs of rice at RM10 each.

By **NORRASYIDAH ARSHAD AND NASUHA BADRUL HUZAINI**

IN the wake of the two-year Covid-19 pandemic and the December 2021 floods that hit Selangor, the state administration has made the important decision to provide a safety net for the people.

Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari introduced a free insurance scheme on the eve of Merdeka 2022 that is accessible to all Selangor citizens, regardless of their financial status.

The move is part of the state government's aim to help lessen the load in times of need.

By September 2023, the state administration aims to receive six million registrations for the Skim Insurans Am Selangor (Insan).

Amirudin said at present, the general insurance scheme that provides coverage of up to RM10,000 has recorded 3.5 million policyholders.

"Selangor is the only state in the country and in the Southeast Asia region that provides insurance coverage to the people as part of its efforts to safeguard their welfare.

"Currently, some 3.5 million people have registered for the programme and we aim to achieve six million people by September next year," he said when delivering his speech at the Jelajah Selangor Penyayang programme in Hulu Langat, on Dec 4.

During the tabling of the 2023 Selangor Budget on Nov 25, Amirudin re-



Protecting the state's most vulnerable

Selangor is the only state in the country and the Southeast Asia region that provides insurance coverage to the people as part of its efforts to safeguard their welfare

Dato' Seri Amiruddin Shari

vealed that a total of 3,561,440 individuals had signed up as policyholders since registration was opened to the public on Oct 1.

He stated that the initiative serves as a buffer for those who have been working hard to make ends meet but are suddenly unable to.

"The general insurance scheme is offered to all Selangor citizens aged 30 days to 80 years whereby, should they sustain an injury and disability or accidental death, the insurance premium is fully borne by the state government.

"With an estimated total protection value of RM60 billion, the scheme is expected to benefit six million people by providing a coverage of RM10,000 for each recipient," he said on Nov 25.

To qualify for the scheme, the recipient must either be born in Selangor or be a voter in the state. The applicant may apply for the scheme using their MyKad or MyKid number or their registered ad-

dress in Selangor.

The scheme is open for registration until Sept 30, 2023, and the insurance coverage period is for 12 months from the date of registration and activation of the policy.

To sign up, download the Wavpay e-wallet application via App Store, Google Play store or Huawei App Gallery or visit programinsan.com.

Meanwhile, the following are other welfare initiatives provided by the state government as announced in the state budget:

- A RM108 million allocation for the Bantuan Kehidupan Sejahtera Selangor (Bingkas), which will benefit 30,000 families. As of October 2022, a total of 22,000 recipients have enjoyed the monthly assistance of RM300 to purchase basic household items. New applications are processed periodically to ensure the quota is filled up.
- A RM1.5 million allocation for the

Welfare Centre Empowerment Programme to ensure that the centres are well managed.

- To restructure the Skim Mesra Usia Emas (SMUE) into Skim Mesra Insan Istimewa (SMIS) with a total allocation of RM30.5 million, which will benefit people with disabilities regardless of their age or income. The scheme allows recipients to enjoy a RM150 voucher during their lifetime, and for their next of kin to receive a RM500 bereavement benefit.
- To allocate RM2 million for the Selangor Legal Aid Fund. In 2023, other than civil cases, the initiative will also be expanded to include shariah cases. The Shariah Legal Aid Fund will help to resolve issues relating to family and domestic violence. The legal aid fund is part of the state government's effort to assist women who are facing violence or problems in their marriage.

Honouring tradition in times of change

By **SULYN CHONG**

2022 was a whirlwind of change as the world came to terms with the pandemic and various political shifts. For Malaysians, this was even more so as we closed the year with a new government in place.

Hence, it comes as no surprise that many are hoping the Year of the Rabbit will be a more peaceful period or at least one with fewer surprises.

Fortunately for us, our little furry friend is said to be hopping in with an abundance of hope, and since it is the year of the Water Rabbit, it will be bringing fluidity and longevity as well.

However, it is wise to take note that water, in the Chinese astrological books, is associated with the colour black, which may not bode well for us all.

The year is predicted to bring a variety of challenges on the money front, echoing many economists' forecasts and concerns that market slowdowns and declining global economic growth will snake their way toward us.

It is understandable that many people would be adversely affected by change. However, change is an unavoidable part of life and like most things, history, culture and humans too, will adapt to the flowing and ebbing waves of time.

We see this most clearly when it comes to Chinese New Year traditions, where different generations observe and practise different aspects or versions according to their needs and capacities.

Home decorations were once made from simple materials such as sticks, paper and candles, but with the arrival of electricity and electronics, they have evolved to become glaring light devices blaring music that can last the whole year through.

Most recently though, organic and zero-waste ideologies seem to be gaining trend and decorations using eco-friendly materials like wood, cloth and glass jars are once more flooding the market.

Pot of abundance

Although few things remain constant through the years, perhaps the one thing that we resist changing the most is the food of our ancestors.

The festival is incomplete if not celebrated with loved ones around a table filled with delicacies that remind us of what our mothers and grandmothers used to make in days gone by.

Yet, even the popular *yee sang* and the humble rice ball dessert *tang yuan* — foods that remind us of how proud we are to be part of the Malaysian Chinese community — have undergone subtle changes over time to feature new flavours and textures.

And although the tossing of *yee sang* is said to be synonymous with the Chinese New Year, a more symbolic dish for the season would be the tedious-to-prepare *poon choy*, or 'vegetable basin' as a direct translation. For obvious reasons many people prefer to call it the 'pot of prosperity'.

The origin of *poon choy* is sketchy but its Cantonese heritage is said to date back to the late Song Dynasty, roughly around 960 to 1279 AD.

Legend has it that when the Mongols invaded China, a young emperor named Bing fled the palace towards the south, to a village somewhere in the Guangdong Province.

Hearing the news, the villagers set out to collect their best available seasonal produce, meaty treasures and delights from the sea to serve him. But alas, with not enough trays to present the food in, a large wooden basin was used instead.

The resulting dish was then ceremoniously shared among the villagers, soldiers, the emperor's aid and the emperor himself, making it a feast for the whole community.

The idea of an overflowing pot of food has now become a symbol of richness in Chinese homes, where layer upon layer of fresh vegetables are placed at the bottom of a pot and decadent cuts of meat, fish and premium shellfish sit on top — a grand display that took millenniums in the making.

Although the tossing of *yee sang* is said to be synonymous with the Chinese New Year, a more symbolic dish for the season would be *poon choy*

The most important value *poon choy* teaches us is patience, something we have to practise throughout the 15 days of the new year. The hard work and number of helping hands needed to cook it are said to be the glue that binds families together.

In modern-day Malaysia, with families shrinking in size and a three-year pandemic pulling people apart, the Rabbit might be the perfect zodiac representative to rebalance *chi* (aura) and restore faith after the tumultuous Tiger makes its exit.

And what better way to welcome this change than with a good pot of *poon choy*, family and laughter.

With that, we at *Selangor Journal* would like to wish a Happy Chinese New Year 兔 (tù) you!

Tears, triumphs at the final whistle

Lionel Messi's World Cup fairytale lit up the year in football as heroics and heartbreak at the Qatar finals captivated fans and highlighted the growth of the world's most popular sport.

European leagues have long dictated the global football calendar but world governing body FIFA's decision to hold the tournament in the Middle East for the first time resulted in a mid-season pause and shook up the domestic club game.

With matches played in air-conditioned stadiums to cope with the heat of the desert state and no beer on tap in stadiums, spectators experienced a World Cup like never before.

But that did not kill the party mood as the finals repeatedly delivered exciting moments and concluded with Messi kissing the golden trophy, the missing piece in his vast collection, as Argentina defeated France on penalties.

Playing in a fifth World Cup for Argentina, the incomparable Messi once again left everyone in awe of his magical powers on the field as he smashed records and delivered on the hopes of a nation, bringing the World Cup home after 36 years.

The illustrious achievement finally brought the diminutive forward out of the shadow of the late great Diego Maradona and reignited the debate about the greatest of all time (GOAT).

Though Argentina triumphed in the final, they were also one of the many heavyweights who suffered an upset in Qatar.

The South American giants were handed a shock defeat by Saudi Arabia in their first group game, which statisticians Gracenote credited as the biggest upset in World Cup history.

Shock results

Shock results were a theme as Japan finished on top of a group that included former winners Spain and Germany, while South Korea also went through at the expense of Uruguay.

With every continent represented in the World Cup last 16,

the most diverse knockout stage in the tournament's history was evidence of the sport's expanding reach.

Underdogs Morocco conquered hearts with their never-say-die attitude, becoming the first African and Arab country to reach the semi-finals.

While the French screamed in agony after coming so close to winning, coach Didier Deschamps said "an important reservoir of talents" promises a bright future for the twice world champions.

France striker Kylian Mbappe brought home the top scorer's Golden Boot, after netting a hat-trick in the final, reminding the world of his calibre before he celebrated his 24th birth-



day just two days after.

Cristiano Ronaldo also made headlines, albeit for different reasons, walking off the pitch in tears after his team was knocked out in the quarterfinals, just weeks after he left Manchester United in a bitter farewell.

A few months before the World Cup, club football in Europe saw Manchester City and Bayern Munich retain their titles, while Paris St Germain, Real Madrid and AC Milan prevailed after losing their grip the previous season.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine led to changes in the hierarchy at Chelsea, with an investment group led by Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital taking over from Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich.

Lionesses roar

While men's football enjoyed an entertaining year, on and off the field, the women's game also had its fair share of memorable moments as England won the European Championship.

Doing what their men's team would not be able to achieve at the World Cup, England's women, covered in confetti, lifted the trophy before a record crowd at Wembley after beating Germany in the final.

The victory marked a monumental day for English football, coming 56 years after England's men beat West Germany in the 1966 World Cup final.

But above all, it highlighted the huge strides made in women's football in England, where the Football Association banned the women's game for nearly 50 years from 1921. - Reuters

8 taboos to avoid on CHINESE NEW YEAR

1 No sweeping on the first day

It is believed that the God of Prosperity (*Fatt Chai*) visits the homes of Chinese people on the first day of the new year (*chor yat/chu yi*) and the act of sweeping is seen as shooing him away, thus, metaphorically sweeping away your luck and money. So, avoid it at all costs!



2 Avoid all things black and white

Black and white are always associated with funerals which is why wearing clothes in those colours or decorating with those colours are said to bring bad luck and unwanted incidents



3 Avoid the word 'die'

The new year is a time for happiness, prosperity, peace and harmony. So, avoid anger and saying undesirable words that may bring bad luck

4 Avoid the number 4

In Chinese, the number four (四) is phonetically pronounced as 'sei' (Cantonese) or 'si' (Mandarin) which have similar sounds as the word 'die' (死 *sǐ*). You really do want to avoid things in 'fours'

5 Avoid breaking anything

Plates, bowls, mirrors, glass ... literally anything as it is a bad omen, akin to the signal of evil in the wind or death at your door



6 Avoid scissors and sharp objects

A common saying in Chinese is "one slash becomes two parts", which signifies the ending of friendships or relationships. As a rule, haircuts are done before the eve of the new year and most salons will only reopen after the festivities are over



7 Clear your debts

You do not want to start the new year with debts or have people owing you. If you do, you may end up being in debt for the rest of the year or be lending money the entire year – a vicious cycle you want to avoid



8 No tears

Children and babies are to be kept happy at all times or at least until noon on the first day (*chor yat/chu yi*) because people only cry during sad or dire situations. The new year is meant to be auspicious, so laugh and be happy as much as you can

