



SELANGOR JOURNAL

Letting women **rise**



THE state government is determined to support women and acknowledge their indispensable roles as caregivers, leaders and decision-makers. Under its women empowerment portfolio and Wanita Berdaya Selangor, various workshops and activities are being introduced to educate, provide platforms and ensure equity. If given the chance, Selangor's women, it believes, can transform the workplace, our value chain and society at large.

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Stadium's plan gets positive response

SHAH ALAM - The engagement session for the Shah Alam Sports Complex (KSSA) redevelopment project, which includes the state's stadium, ended on Feb 10 and received the participation of over 10,000 people.

Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari said the public's participation at SACC Mall since Jan 26 proves there is interest in the project.

He said that more than 95 per cent of the total number of people gave positive feedback and agreed with the design plan of the sports complex.

"This exhibition gathered thousands of people, about 1,000 to 2,000 people at one time because there happened to be a Selangor FC jersey introduction ceremony.

"In fact, it was watched by more than 1.2 million people online. It means that the ratio is large and this is evidence that the public's interest (in the redevelopment of KSSA) is very high," he said when met after visiting the exhibition space, here on Feb 10.

Amirudin said the state has also received many suggestions from the public and will finetune them as best as possible.

"We have to look at the detailed report but there are definitely many things that were suggested. Some suggestions may already have been implemented but the details have changed.

"For example, we already have extreme sports venues and morning market sites. We will see how best to accommodate all the suggestions," he said.

Meanwhile, Amirudin said he would discuss the planning permission process in addition to land exchange negotiations with the developer, Malaysian Resources Corporation Berhad (MRCB).

"This project is still on schedule. Hopefully, in the first quarter of this year, we will start breaking ground and development can happen as soon as possible, until 2026.

"Light Rail Transit (LRT) services are expected to begin in 2024 and this will positively impact the KSSA project," he added.

The KSSA exhibition was organised by Menteri Besar Selangor (Incorporated), or MBI, and gave the public the opportunity to view and comment on the construction of the 76.08-hectare project.

State projects served as inspiration

By **SITI ROHAIZAH ZAINAL**

KUALA LUMPUR - The Selangor government has long intended to upgrade and expand Subang Airport, an idea supported by Putrajaya when it unveiled Budget 2023, says Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari.

The Menteri Besar said the state had proposed the plan to the Finance and Transport Ministries, stating that the project would benefit everyone, including tourists.

During the tabling of the Federal budget on Feb 24, it was revealed that the plan to expand Subang Airport, and also to upgrade the Penang International Airport, would be spearheaded by Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB).

"The budget was prepared to accommodate all parties, including the low-income (B40) and middle-income (M40) groups, even though the Prime Minister at the start raised several concerns, such as the national debt and the relatively slow economic movement.

"However, in addition to welfare projects, I believe



that the Prime Minister has also put a lot of effort into improving infrastructure and renovating public transport facilities, such as the airports.

"Upgrades to the Subang Airport and the proposed development of the main port on Carey Island is in line with what we (the state administration) have raised in the First Selangor Plan (RS-1)," Amirudin said when met after the budget's tabling by Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in the Dewan Rakyat on Feb 24.

Anwar said the expansion of the two airports, along with the plan to develop the main port on Carey Island by the private sector, will attract more investors and support the growth of international trade.

Meanwhile, another budget initiative unveiled by Anwar, Skim Perubatan Madani, also has its roots in Selangor.

The medical benefits scheme, modelled after the state's Iltizam Selangor Sihat (ISS) programme through a RM120 million allocation, will allow the poor to seek treatment from private general practitioner clinics.

Selangor's ISS offers residents of the state up to RM500 in financial aid for basic medical care, including outpatient costs and vaccinations. The scheme also provides insurance coverage of up to RM5,000 and a RM1,000 death benefit.

"Aside from Skim Perubatan Madani that was inspired (by state initiatives), other efforts were also modelled after (state incentives), such as the fees for motorcycle licence," said Amirudin, referring to the Roda Darul Ehsan (RiDE) initiative, which offers a B2 (bikes below 250cc) motorcycle licence subsidy amounting to RM350 for low-income urban youths.

In the Federal budget, Anwar said that the government will absorb licence test fees for B2 motorcycles, taxis, buses and e-hailing vehicles.

"I am pleased to see that several programmes (by the state) served as models for the Unity Government and that we would be able to work together on their implementation and the challenges faced," Amirudin said.

The Gombak MP also welcomed Putrajaya's plans to build new schools and kickstart flood mitigation projects that include the construction of the Sungai Klang-Sungai Rasau dual-purpose reservoir.

Selangor's earnings returned to citizens

HULU SELANGOR - Selangor has consistently recorded economic growth and has received encouraging returns that were given back to the people.

State executive councillor for rural development Borhan Aman Shah said the state has continued to be the largest gross domestic product (GDP) contributor for the past five years.

"We started with 23.2 per cent in 2017, and in 2021 we contributed 24.8 per cent. To better understand this, for every RM10 of our country's earnings, RM2.40 is contributed by Selangor.

"In every RM100, RM24 or RM25 comes from work, economic contribution and development within the state of Selangor.

"That is why we cannot fail. If we fail, it will have an impact on the country as a whole," he said when speaking at the Hulu Selangor Jelajah Kita Selangor Penyayang (JKSP) programme at Oasis Batang Kali on Feb 19.

Borhan said the increase in revenue recorded by Selangor was returned to the people through various initiatives and welfare programmes.

"But those numbers are not something

the state government is proud of.

"The increase in revenue for the past three consecutive years should be returned to the people through initiatives that will lead to the empowerment of the people every day," he said.

The state government through various agencies and subsidiaries has implemented 44 welfare programmes under the framework of Iltizam Selangor Penyayang (ISP).

The ISP was restructured from the Inisiatif Peduli Rakyat through an allocation of RM600 million so that more residents

could receive the benefits provided by the state government.

The people's aid package outlined six initiatives, namely the Selangor People's Empowerment Initiative (Iltizam Pemberdayaan Rakyat Selangor), the Selangor Health Initiative (Iltizam Kesihatan Selangor), the Selangor Education Initiative (Iltizam Pendidikan Selangor), the Selangor Housing Initiative (Iltizam Perumahan Selangor), the Selangor Entrepreneurship Initiative (Iltizam Keusahawanan Selangor) and the Selangor Child-Friendly Initiative (Iltizam Mesra Anak Selangor).

Pathway out of poverty

KUALA LUMPUR - There are many initiatives in the 2023 Federal Budget that can narrow the socioeconomic gap between the country's haves and have-nots, and stamp out hardcore poverty.

The Menteri Besar of Selangor and Gombak member of parliament Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari said efforts include the handing out of cash aid through Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR) to more than eight million households in generous amounts.

"If we go back to our revenue reports, we can identify one of the root causes of the people's problems — RM98 billion of the country's income comes from corporate taxes and RM30 billion from the taxes of working individuals.

"This goes to show that it is the taxes collected from corporate giants and bigwigs that are keeping the country afloat, and not the taxes from personal income. The majority of the population do not make much, and there is a big divide between those who make a lot of money, those who make some, and those who do not make much at all.

"To challenge this imbalance, Tambun (Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim) has created a plan to end hardcore poverty by introducing initiatives

to help increase the income of the poor and by channelling more aid. This includes identifying more recipients for STR," he said.

Amirudin was speaking after the Budget 2023 debate in Parliament on March 1.

Another budget rollout, the Inisiatif Pendapatan Rakyat (IPR), helps individuals in the B40 group to be independent and seek ways to increase their income.

This is to prevent them from falling into the category of B70.

Through IPR, knowledge and cash assistance will be provided to encourage more individuals to join the fields of agriculture and small business.

Amirudin said: "This initiative must be given prominence and supported. We must believe that the Unity Government can fix the nation's problems, instead of continuing with our endless squabbling that will not bring about any meaningful changes."

He added that Malaysia has more than 30 years to go to reach 100 years as a nation and said it is time the country pushes forward economically so as not to be overtaken by our neighbours, Indonesia and Vietnam.



Tech institute to produce skilled workforce

KUALA LUMPUR - The Selangor government is investing in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) by setting up an institute called the Selangor Technical Skills Development Centre (STDC).

Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari said although met with some obstacles, the institute needs to be up and running to help the students find jobs according to their abilities.

"Many people say that our country lacks skilled workers. When we set out to invite investors to our country, we face the dilemma of not being able to offer them the workforce they need.

"Selangor has set up STDC to cater to between 70 and 80 per cent of our manufacturing needs and we are now able to work with Siemens,

Apple, Festo and Dassault System," he said after a session to debate the 2023 Federal Budget in Parliament.

The Gombak representative also called for support for the Federal's move to give a big allocation to the Education Ministry.

"Budgets are not just about pushing the economic agenda. We must invest in our young, in education.

"Basic education is vital to ensure we have a generation who are skilled at technical knowledge."

STDC is a technical institution under the management of the Selangor state and Menteri Besar Selangor (Incorporated) or MBI.

In August 2020, INPENS International College that is located in Kuala Selangor was rebranded as STDC to offer more vocational learning.

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Free screenings helping to save lives

SHAH ALAM - The Selangor Saring free health screening programme organised by the state government for early detection of ailments has recorded approximately 22,513 registrations throughout 2022.

Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari said up to 49 per cent of those screened were revealed to require follow-up action for prevention and early treatment of their respective health problems.

"This figure is almost half of the sample, and the initial follow-up steps will certainly contribute to their wellbeing," he said in a Facebook post on March 1.

Amirudin added that Selangor Saring is offered for free to state residents as it is in line with the objective of creating a healthy society, per the goals of Kita Selangor Penyang.

Preventive efforts are a necessity to ensure Selangor residents possess and retain a good quality of life, following the Covid-19 pandemic that has affected the community in social, economic, and health aspects.

Previously, state executive councillor for public health Dr Siti Mariah Mahmud said that the Selangor government will continue the programme this year with registrations open to the public on the SELangkah app beginning Feb 15.

She said the programme aims to benefit 31,000 people in all 56 constituencies through an allocation of RM2.6 million.

Running from May to September last year with a RM3.4 million allocation, Selangor Saring is aimed at individuals with a family history of hereditary ailments, those who are obese, and those leading unhealthy lifestyles.

The following are the categories of checks that the programme provides:

- Non-communicable diseases: kidney and heart disease, diabetes and hypertension
- Cancer diseases: colorectal, prostate, cervical and breast
- Eye-related diseases: myopia, glaucoma and retinopathy
- Additional screening: dental and ear examinations
- Physiotherapy

More information can be found at selangorsaring.selangkah.my and any issues relating to registration can be directed to the Selcare hotline at 1-800-22-6600.



Women's shelters, nurseries a priority

By **SULYN CHONG**

SHAH ALAM - The state government has allocated grants to help build and improve shelter homes for women, said state executive councillor for women empowerment and family development Dr Siti Mariah Mahmud.

"In 2021 the Menteri Besar (Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari) announced it (the grants) but it took some time for us to determine the criteria and so on. But we have approved all eligible applications.

"These shelters are built on the basis of housing those who have household constraints. Only one institution in Malaysia, the Women's Aid Organisation, caters to domestic abuse victims," she said after launching the Forum Sembang Sihat (Health Forum) organised by Team Beauty with Brains of Akademi Kepimpinan Wanita Cohort Three under Wanita Berdaya Selangor at Galabites Lounge, Radia Commercial Bukit Jelutong, here on Feb 11.

Dr Siti Mariah also said the state government has been encouraging workplaces to build more nurseries or kindergartens to support working mothers.

"The Women, Family and Community Development Ministry has been giving grants to those who want to set up nurseries at workplaces. We at the state level also encourage private caregivers to do so.

"However, many (private caregivers) have complained that the procedures to gain licences are complicated, thus, we will be speaking to local authorities and the relevant parties to standardise the procedures and fees," she said.

Dr Siti Mariah added that the state government has been providing intensive childcare courses under Yayasan Warisan Anak Selangor (Yawas) with the aim to provide understanding on the basics of childcare.

"We teach childcare providers the three basic points of safety, cleanliness and health. In the past two years we even offered grants of about RM2,000 each to housewives in the B40 group who want to upgrade their homes, such as buy baby cots, tile bathrooms, lay non-slip mats and so on, to become suitable childcare centres.

"We see these housewives and women helping to provide childcare services as a state asset as they enable other women to go to work with a peaceful heart."

Meanwhile, Dr Siti Mariah said that the community should encourage and empower women as leaders and place them in decision-making positions for the betterment of women in Selangor and the country.

"Politically, there are not many women, thus, we should encourage more women to be in politics. But politics here does not necessarily mean being an assemblyman or MP. It is being in a position where we can make decisions and participate in decision-making processes."

Dr Siti Mariah said although there are support systems in place for women they are not enough to push them out into the workplace.

"The state government has created many support systems for women because we want women to go out to work. We want to empower women so they can be contributors to the country's productivity. However, it is not enough.

"Current developments still do not take into account the facilities needed to encourage women in workplaces, such as providing nurseries or kindergartens."

Dr Siti Mariah also said the state government is concerned with issues of obesity among its citizens and stunted brain development among the younger generation.

"Many of us are actually weighing more than our ideal body weight. Being overweight can cause many non-communicable diseases such as heart problems, high cholesterol and diabetes. This is why we need to combat obesity before it becomes a heavy burden on our healthcare system.

"As for stunted brain development, we are seeing more and more people battling with stress, anxiety and depression. The state government has an ecosystem in place to support them, but we as a society should offer help where needed."

Forum Sembang Sihat is aimed at providing free advice on healthy living and healthy eating in the community.

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Selangor first to implement backup water systems

By **SOFIA NASIR**

SEPANG - Selangor will lead the way in pioneering methods to resolve water supply issues via Skim Jaminan Air Mentah (SJAM).

State executive councillor for infrastructure Izham Hashim said it is currently the only state in Malaysia to implement a water supply support system, which is being built along Sungai Selangor and Sungai Semenyih.

"Alternative raw water sources from the Hybrid Off River Augmentation Sys-

tem (Horas) 600 reservoir in Sungai Selangor, as well as the Pond C retention pond in Sungai Semenyih, will be capable of providing up to 67 per cent of water supply to the entire state.

"These two projects are also able to supply water for a period of five days in the event of a pollution incident," he said, following his field visit to survey the progress of Pond C's construction in Jenderam Hilir, here on Feb 16.

Also in attendance was Selangor State Government Deputy Secretary (Development) Dato' Johary Anuar.

Izham added that the two projects are expected to complete by year end and will be the solution to the water supply issues in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Putrajaya.

SJAM is a state government initiative to address the issue of water supply disruption caused by pollution at raw water sources, especially in Sungai Selangor and Sungai Langat.

Meanwhile, Izham said that Pond C is expected to benefit some 1.2 million users once it begins operating in October.

"Usually the Sungai Semenyih Water Treatment Plant (WTP) receives water directly from the river, but the retention pond will serve as a backup.

"When pollution occurs, we will detect it and stop the river water from entering the WTP, switching to the pond instead which can last up to five days," he said.

He added that the RM85 million project is now at 54 per cent completion and would be able to hold approximately 12 per cent of the state's entire water supply, encompassing the areas of Putrajaya, Puchong, and Petaling Jaya.

Luas keeps close check on supply levels

SHAH ALAM - The Selangor Water Management Authority (Luas) regularly monitors the Hybrid Off River Augmentation Storage (Horas) 600 system, to ensure the quantity and quality of raw water supply is maintained.

The agency also monitors other alternative water sources and ensures they can be used whenever the need arises.

"Horas 600 is one of the components of the Selangor Raw Water Guarantee Scheme (SJAM) by the state government. The alternative raw water from Horas 600 will be diverted into Sungai Selangor to increase the river flow level and reduce the release of water from the dams at Sungai Selangor and Sungai Tinggi.

"The system is also capable of providing an alternative supply of raw water for an estimated 100 days during the dry season, while simultaneously being able to increase the dilution rate in river water in the event of raw water quality (pollution) issues," it said in a Facebook post.

Previously, during the tabling of the 2021 Selangor Budget, Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari outlined four steps to overcome water supply disruptions.

They include a nanotechnology pilot project to treat Sungai Gong water, and increasing the number of water quality telemetry stations for early warning upstream of the intakes.

The other steps are the implementation of a raw water pumping project from the Horas reservoir and the off-river storage (ORS) in Bestari Jaya, as well as 24-hour surveillance in sensitive areas.

On Feb 13, Luas in a statement said that it has identified 98 alternative ponds that could become the state's additional raw water source.

The agency said 20 of these ponds have been gazetted under Protection Zones for control, under Section 48 of the Luas Enactment 1999.

It said the remaining ponds are being gazetted in order to prepare them for use when necessary.

The ponds remain under constant monitoring by the authority, in order to prevent any damage and disturbance to their quality and quantity.



High time for stiffer laws against polluters, says exco

SHAH ALAM - The state government welcomes the readiness of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change to amend the Water Services Industry Act 2006 (Act 655).

State executive councillor for environment Hee Loy Sian said it is time for the unity government to realise the amendments three years after its proposal during the tenure of a previous administration.

"We heard of this proposal in 2020, three years ago, but it has not been amended.

"I hope the government can implement this amendment soon because it has taken a long time," he said when contacted by *SelangorKini*.

Hee explained that the increase in fines of up to RM10 million is important to give awareness to big manufacturing companies who have not taken environmental issues seriously.

The Kajang representative suggested that the government add clauses such as mandatory prison time, in addition to requiring polluters to carry out clean-up work at their own cost.

"All this time, the government has had to pay high costs for clean-up work. It is not fair to the taxpayers," he said.

Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad on Feb 16 announced that the government will amend the Water Services Industry Act 2006 (Act 655) at the Parliament session next June.

The amendment will impose heavier penalties on those who pollute water sources, from a RM100,000 fine to RM10 million, while a year's imprisonment will be increased to 15 years or both.

Dassault hub ready in a year

By ZAREEF MUZAMMIL

SHAH ALAM - The maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility for business jets operated by Dassault Aviation is anticipated to be fully operational in the first quarter of next year.

State executive councillor for industry and trade Dato' Teng Chang Khim said that the world's largest business aircraft manufacturer is currently developing the MRO centre, which is constructed on a 144,000 square-foot site at the Skypark Regional Aviation Centre (RAC), here.

He said that once completed, the maintenance facility is able to accommodate nine units of Falcon 8X and seven units of Falcon 10X aircraft.

"The maintenance centre for the Falcon aircraft is currently under construction and it would also provide MRO services for the aircraft from the company (Dassault Aviation) as well. This would make it the largest MRO hub in the Asia Pacific.

"This is part of Selangor's ambition. According to the Selangor Aerospace Action Plan, the state aims to expand the aerospace industry in the next 10 years," Teng said when met after inspecting a Falcon 8X aircraft, here on Feb 23.

Teng said the Falcon 8X is the most recent business jet developed by the French manufacturer.

The aircraft was showcased to the public at the Selangor Aviation Show (SAS) in September of last year and is also planned to be on display at the upcoming exhibition.



Teng and Dassault Falcon Asia-Pacific President Jean Michel Jacob pose with the Falcon 8X at the Skypark RAC in Shah Alam on Feb 23

"I am pleased that I was able to examine the aircraft and get the latest information from Dassault Aviation regarding the growth of the sector in Southeast

Asia and Asia Pacific.

"As a Selangorian, I am proud that Falcon and Dassault Aviation are based here," he added.

Dassault Aviation is a French aerospace company with a track record of manufacturing both military aircraft and business jets.

Foreign investment for 2022 to reach RM12b

BANTING - The Selangor government expects last year's foreign investment value in the state to reach a total of RM12 billion, exceeding the initial target of RM10 billion.

State executive councillor for investment, trade, industry and small-and-medium industries Dato' Teng Chang Khim said this is due to the initial target having already been reached in September last year.

Therefore, the committee is studying the total investment data of last year before setting up the investment target for this year.

"This year, we will face many chal-

lenges as many economists expect us to enter a 'winter' in economic development but there are those who believe that it is only external, not internal,"

Teng told Bernama after the groundbreaking ceremony of Compass@Kota Seri Langat on Feb 17.

He said looking at the geopolitical and economic development situation around the world, there is still uncertainty in interest rates in the United States and if the rate continues to rise, it would certainly cause a burden.

The state government sees the economic situation as a challenge and is

taking bold steps through the implementation of the First Selangor Plan (RS-1) to help drive economic development in the state.

RS-1 covers three main development projects, namely the Integrated Development Region In South Selangor (Idriss) project, involving the districts of Kuala Langat and Sepang; the Sabak Bernam Development Area (Sabda); and the Selangor Maritime Gateway (SMG).

"However, we have a bit of interruption because in two months, the Selangor State Legislative Assembly will be dissolved and many businesses will not be able to be carried out during the dissolution period, but state investment agency Invest Selangor will continue to operate," Teng said.

Earlier, the councillor was present to officiate the Compass Groundbreaking Ceremony@KSL, an 89.03-hectare lo-

gistics hub with a gross development value of RM1.2 billion which is divided into two parts, the 48.56-hectare Compass Industrial and Logistics Site and the 23.88-hectare Compass SME Precinct.

The Compass Industrial and Logistics Site contains build-to-suit warehouses and manufacturing lots of 130,000 to 500,000 square feet while Compass SME Precinct is a site equipped with ready-built factories and warehouses with various sizes ranging from 3,600 to 50,000 square feet.

The project is the result of a joint venture between Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB) through its subsidiary, MIDF Property Bhd; KWEST Sdn Bhd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Retirement Fund (Incorporated); and Area Group of Companies, to build a green industrial site, which is expected to be completed within three years. - Bernama





A hundred days of giving back

By **ALANG BENDAHARA**

In the 100 days since assuming office on Nov 24, 2022, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has had to battle the nation's post-pandemic economic slump, massive debts, and rising costs of living.

Bursa Malaysia rocketed to a new intra-day high the day Anwar was announced as the prime minister.

Within the first minute of trading, the key index extended its gains to over 1,500, up 58.38 points from the day before and ended the day at 1,501.88.

This was the Bursa's record high since 1,512.050 on Aug 30, 2022. The ringgit, too, climbed 1.8 per cent to its highest in over two months versus the US dollar.

Anwar, as the country's former finance minister from 1991 to 1998, carried the burden of the nation's RM1.2 trillion debt upon his shoulders the moment he took over Putrajaya.

Thus, it came as no surprise to many when he made the announcement to decline to receive any salary, both as prime minister and finance minister. His team of Cabinet ministers too, agreed to a 20 per cent pay cut until Malaysia reaches economic recovery. Suffice it to say, all government ministries and bodies were instructed to tighten their belts.

In a move welcomed by those in the agriculture sector, Anwar directed Padiberas Nasional (Bernas) to distribute RM10 million to 150,000 impoverished rice farmers last year, and RM50 million more to them this year, after

discussions with Bernas tycoon Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar Albukhary.

The Prime Minister also announced RM100 million in flood aid for victims in Kelantan and Terengganu when in December, the Northeast Monsoon brought sudden downpours to the east coast states. RM1,000 in cash were promised to each family, and in the event of an accident caused by the floods, RM10,000 would be given.

In February, Anwar announced the appointment of former Petronas CEO Tan Sri Mohd Hassan Marican as head of a five-person Special Advisory Body to the Finance Minister. They, too, declined a salary.

Weekend meetings

On a Sunday three days after taking his oath of office, Anwar famously called on all senior officers in government departments and agencies to attend a National Action Council on Cost of Living (Naccol) meeting.

In the 100 days since, he has also put a halt on imposing higher electricity tariffs on all domestic and small- and medium-entrepreneurs.

When time did not allow him to redo the existing 2023 Federal Budget, he unveiled a revised, mini version on Dec 20 to continue running the country with a RM107.71 billion allocation.

In January, parents of school-going children were relieved when the mini budget allocated RM150 to each of their children as early schooling assistance,

irrespective of how much they earned. Small-time farmers, too, were compensated with RM200 each for the damage brought on by the unexpected monsoon.

The mini budget also provided a special additional annual salary increment (KGT) of RM100 to public service officers, a special cash aid of RM700 to government workers in Grade 56 and lower, and RM350 to all government sector retirees.

Importantly, 50,000 job openings were created through the programme MySTEP.

On Feb 24, the Tambun member of parliament finally found the chance to unveil a new, RM388.1 billion federal budget.

To ease the financial burdens of the B40 group, phase one of the Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah was rolled out on Jan 16 where RM1.67 billion was channelled to 8.7 million people in the low-income bracket. Four million households benefited, receiving RM300 each.

Also benefiting from the programme were 1.2 million senior citizens without spouses and 3.5 million single persons, with each receiving RM100 to lighten living costs. The cash aid was handed out in January instead of March to speed up help for these groups.

Running on compassion

'Rahmah' in Arabic connotes compassion, charity and blessings.

It is perhaps useful to understand

this, as Anwar's Unity Government has since rolled out spin-off programmes based on the concept of alleviating the burdens of the people — Payung Rahmah, Bakul Rahmah, Jualan Rahmah, Kafe Rahmah and Pakej Rahmah, to name a few.

When Chinese New Year approached, the prime minister announced toll-free travel on all state roads for Jan 20 and 21, for families to meet without additional expenditure.

Other people-friendly initiatives in the 100 days of his leadership include a 30 per cent reduction in assessment rates for all homes that cost less than RM300,000 in Putrajaya; a RM10,000 cash compensation for the families of the victims of the Batang Kali landslide and RM1,000 for those affected; and introducing a prepaid mobile package through Pakej Perpaduan that offers reduced monthly rates of just RM5 for youths, the elderly, the disabled and army veterans.

Anwar also put a stop to the common practice of procuring government projects through direct tenders, and on Feb 27, ordered the re-tendering of six flood mitigation projects to save the country RM2 billion.

Under his direction, the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project has been green-lighted to proceed, but with its cost reduced by RM11.01 billion. Anwar has also ordered for Magnum, Sports Toto and Da Ma Cai lottery draws to be reduced from 22 times a year to just eight.



By SULYN CHONG

It has been two centuries since the women's suffrage movement took place in Europe and America but many women around the world today are still suffering from inequality and inequity among peers of the opposite gender.

Two centuries may feel like a long time to request for the rights to make choices and be heard, but the enfranchisement of women in Great Britain and the United States only truly happened sometime after World War I, between the period of 1914 and 1939, a staggering 100 years after the start of the movement in the early 1800s.

That war may have been won and much of women's rights today have been hard-earned with literal blood, sweat and tears spilt, but even in this day and age, there are many more issues that require the attention of various quarters for women to properly attain that balance which they seek.

Fair wages, equal opportunities in the workplace, having their voices heard, being able to make important and sound decisions, and most especially, having the right to lead, not only in the household but also on the political stage, are some of the ways to tilt that imbalance.

This year's International Women's Day (IWD), which falls on March 8 and runs throughout the month, is calling on all people to learn to #EmbraceEquity not only between genders but also between races, cultural lines, different abilities and even financial capabilities.

Everyone is implored to understand that equal opportunities are no longer enough because equality can in fact be exclusionary, rather than inclusive, as each person will require different resources to be able to be on par with one another.

On the other hand, equity acknowledges that each individual will need different allocations due to their different circumstances to enable them to reach a comparable outcome.

Speaking up for gender equity



“It was only through the support and encouragement of my fellow ladies (in the competition) who taught me that women are so much stronger than we think and that a mother's love is always the most true, that helped me pull through

Norzawani Zakiah

Loving yourself, loving others

“To love the world is to first love yourself” — an anonymous viral phrase that alludes to how people these days are finding themselves being burned out from the rat race of the world. The constant striving to be the best, to stand out, and to be heard in a crowd, often leaves us feeling exhausted and empty.

Having the time to just sit in silence and be with our thoughts is a rare luxury, one that many of us cannot afford. Many women feel the need to split themselves into replicas just to make sure that life goes on as planned.

However, we are not Gal Gadot equipped with Wonder Woman powers.

And although we all know that love is a strong motivator in everything we do, finding it, be it from ourselves or from others, is like finding a pearl in the ocean.

The winner of the recent Gadis Inspirasi Negeri Selangor (Selangor's Inspirational Girl) competition, Norzawani Zakiah Khairul Zaki, 26, spoke to *Selangor Journal* recently and said that love is not the easiest thing to give or receive and it is always intangible, making it harder for people to believe.

“I was taking care of my mother when she fell sick and that took up most of my time. I even quit my job to be with her. It was not easy to care for someone you really love and it broke my heart when she passed away. You can say I almost lost myself before joining the competition.

“It was only through the support and encouragement of my fellow ladies (in the competition) who taught me that women are so much stronger than we think and that a mother's love is always the most true, that



helped me pull through,” she said.

The feelings of empowerment shared among ladies for ladies is in a way the purest form of support that will drive women to the top, as Stella Leong Sin Yin, second runner-up for the same competition, attested.

“The competition was an eye-opening experience where I met lots of capable women who wore different hats.

“I learned a lot, not only from the programme but also from the ladies who were there. It was through them that I realised there are many parts of me which need improvement, but I was encouraged by them and that opened my vision and deepened my understanding of what women empowerment truly is,” she said.

Pushing for political literacy

Women's role in the household is irreplaceable but to see women growing in decision-making positions outside of the home is encouraging too, with more traditionally male-dominated positions being held by their female counterparts in both the private and public sectors these days.

This forward change of culture is heartening to see as women are given equitable chances in power roles that were unheard of a century ago. However, these chances are not

happening as quickly or widely as many believe.

Even more so on the political stage, where political literacy is not widely shared and is something that many women have not been given much opportunity to explore or learn, thus creating a wide gap between the genders.

This can be witnessed in the most recent 15th general election where Malaysia's target of 30 per cent women leadership in Parliament came to a naught as men dominated the fighting ring.

Leong, who is also a law graduate, said there are platforms for women to learn about politics, but they are not widespread enough.

“I trust that in the current digital age, there are more spaces and avenues for women to speak their minds and be heard.

“However, opportunities for women's representation in politics are still few due to low



Dr Siti Mariah poses with the participants of the Gadis Inspirasi Negeri Selangor competition, at the Grand Dorsett Subang, on Feb 4

“Opportunities for women representation in politics are still few due to low political literacy among the community and I would like to push for that. Hopefully, with my current work under DAP (Democratic Action Party), I am able to do something to heighten that knowledge for the betterment of society,” she said.

While both Norzawani Zakiah and Leong agreed on wanting more women role models to inspire everyone no matter the gender, they believe that both women and men should always understand and tolerate each other in every field to be able to become better as a society.

“I believe that word of mouth always gets the message across better. It is able to highlight issues about women and educate people much faster,” said Leong.

“But to change a person is never easy unless you are able to touch their heart. That is when change can happen and I believe that empowering someone does start from the heart,” said Norzawani Zakiah.

Stella Leong

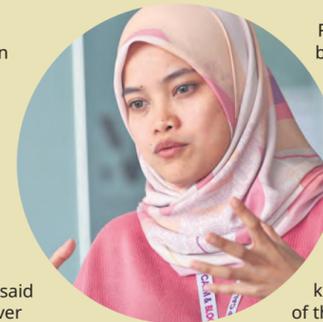


Removing barriers for women

THE Selangor government's Wanita Berdaya Selangor Sdn Bhd (WBS), in collaboration with the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Coalition of Women's Organisations (KLSCWO), is organising an International Women's Day event on March 11 at Hotel Sama-sama, KLIA, Selangor.

WBS Research and Policy Development Department senior manager Rusni Tajari said the event will see the handover of grants to successful shelter home applicants in the Selangor region.

“These grants are given to empower women in the state who are in dire need by providing programmes to get them back on their feet,” she said.



Rusni also shared that WBS will be running the Sidang Wanita Selangor 2023 (2023 Selangor Women's Conference, Siwanis), a simulation workshop for 56 women participants to experience a Parliamentary session.

“The participants were chosen from a list of over 120 submissions. These are women who are knowledgeable about the issues of the state and of other women, and are ready to offer solutions to the problems.

“The main objective is to increase women representation in Parliament as well as decision-making positions because we are certainly not there yet. The 30 per cent

(parliamentary) quota has not been achieved and we hope this initiative will boost that,” she said.

Rusni added that the challenge now is to try and implement the women quota in Parliament as support from the system is lacking.

“We are trying to push for change but it will not be easy.

“However, we believe that this initiative will be a good platform for these women to attain appropriate financing and backing to continue fighting for the cause ... to improve and level themselves up to be leaders in decision-making positions, to push for backup from the workplace or political party they are working with, and to listen to women as there are many talented women out there,” she said.

Siwanis is the third women's conference of its kind to be held in Malaysia, with the previous ones held in Negeri Sembilan and Penang.



Suffragettes in a women's protest during the 1800s, in Great Britain

By SULYN CHONG

THE smell of spices and sweet pandan wafts through the open space as customers bustle past one another to get to the stall of their choice in the hope of securing a delicious treat to break their fast for the day.

The smells are strong even through the mask that everyone is made to wear and although the customers are many, the numbers do not come close to half of what it was in the pre-pandemic days.

This scene is typical of last year's Ramadan, at the food bazaars that dotted the length and breadth of the country.

This year, however, almost all Covid-19 standard operating procedures have been lifted and it would be untrue to say that no one is excited to crowd the delightful bazaars once again.

The eagerness to savour *nasi briyani* paired with chunky mutton *rendang*, *ayam percik* with extra *kuah* on the side or the crowd favourite, the creamy and silky *kuih tepung pelita*, is strong as the fasting month approaches this March.

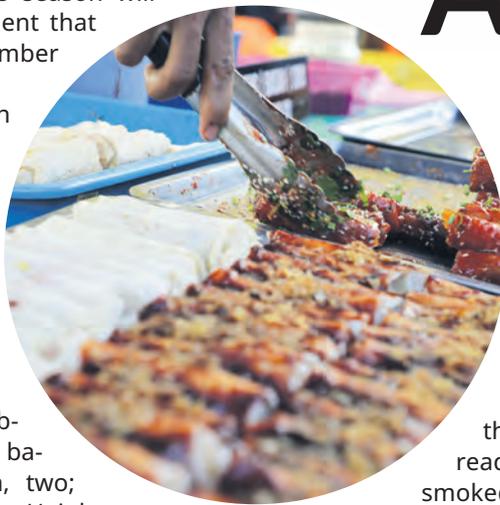
Ramadan bazaars, the long-awaited treat that all Malaysians enjoy, is perhaps the epitome of the uniqueness of our culture because food unites people. And with the pandemic fears somewhat subsided, this season will likely see a merriment that many of us remember from yesteryears.

In anticipation of the festivities and crowds, the Subang Jaya City Council (MBSJ) said in a statement that it has added 10 more locations for entrepreneurs to set up stalls, with Subang Jaya seeing 10 bazaar areas; Kinrara, two; Puchong, eight; Putra Heights, two; as well as Serdang and Seri Kembangan with seven, bringing the total to 29.

Its Corporate and Strategic Management Department deputy director, Azfarizal Abdul Rashid, explained that the additional locations not only open up more business opportunities for micro-entrepreneurs but also provide space for the resident community to get a variety of food.



A Ramadan tradition most loved



"The types of food that will be sold at these Ramadan bazaars this year are in the categories of ready-cooked food, smoked/baked food at the location, and drinks," he said.

The council also informed that the Ramadan Bazaar Permit Application for the Year 2023 was opened online for a month from Dec 13 last year and a total of 1,055 applications were received.

MBSJ added that as in previous years, they are looking to put in place several environmental sustainability practices at the bazaars.

"We have the 'Bring Your Own Food Container' campaign, the 'Free of Polystyrene and the Use of Plastic Straws' campaign, the 'Cashless Transaction Campaign' and the 'Used Cooking Oil Recycling' campaign," it said.

Meanwhile, the Shah Alam City Council (MBSA) is also offering a sizeable 25 locations with a total of 1,270 stalls spread out at Section 7, Section 18, Section 19, U8 Bukit Jelutong, U10 Alam Budiman and U13 Setia Alam, among others.

It said this year's bazaars would see a push towards the digitisation of traders which is in line with the Selangor Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari's aspiration of making Selangor a smart city.

"We have collaborated with Platform Selangor (Plats) to allow bazaar traders to easily register for plots through the Plats Digital Directory.

"Besides that, people can obtain information on what is being sold by the traders in the bazaars using the same directory and they would no longer need to queue to purchase food. Members of the public can easily order food via WhatsApp to the trader of their choice and pick it up at the location," it said.

MBSA said that it is collaborating with Selangor Information Technology and Digital Economy (Sidec) to implement the Smart Raya Selangor programme that will feature two cashless Ramadan bazaars in Section 18 and Section 13. The bazaars will focus on three digitalisation elements, namely, the widespread use of the e-wallet, O2O (offline to online) concept-based business, and business using the e-commerce platform.

"Additionally, we are collaborating with World Wide Fund Malaysia (WWF) to continue the MBSA MySave Food programme that was launched during last year's Ramadan.

"This programme will see excess food for the day be collected from bazaar traders to be distributed to volunteers who will then offer it to those in need," it said.

MBSA advised that while everyone should enjoy the celebration that Ramadan brings, health and safety issues are still a concern during the endemic phase of Covid-19 and that all food purchases must be done prudently so as not to contribute to wastage.

Being an agent of change

By **SULYN CHONG**

WOMEN in decision-making positions are far and few between but Dr Siti Mariah Mahmud has shown us that it is not impossible to be in a position of power and own it.

In addition to being a state representative for the Seri Serdang state constituency since 2018, Dr Siti Mariah is also the state executive councillor for three portfolios, namely, public health, women development and family empowerment as well as unity.

Due to her wealth of medical knowledge, she was a catalyst for the Selangor government during the Covid-19 pandemic which hit Malaysia hard from March 2020 until late 2021.

Through this stormy phase, Dr Siti Mariah made the move to set up the Selvax programme, a vaccination programme that offered free Covid-19 vaccinations which benefited hundreds and thousands of people in Selangor, and helped the state achieve herd immunity that was in line with the federal government's National Covid-19 Immunisation programme (Pick).

Although Selvax was a successful programme, her proudest achievement to date and most popular among the people would be the Selangor Mental Health (Sehat) programme which began even before the pandemic hit.

"Mental health disorders are the second-highest health problem suffered in Selangor and it was accentuated during the pandemic. That is why we encourage everyone in Selangor to make use of the programme as we have qualified counsellors onboard to help with all sorts of mental issues.

"Needless to say, Sehat has become a complete ecosystem which runs on its own now and it is very much community-based. It is also digitalised, so it is very convenient to use it and seek help," she said.

The Sehat programme is now mostly driven by passionate volunteers (Sukar — a health volunteer team for the state, very much like Team Selangor) in every state constituency but there is still lots of room for improvement as Dr Siti Mariah said.

"In the urban areas, the programme is well-received and utilised actively. Even with our Selangor Saring and Selvax programme, you can see that people are more responsive to these initiatives in urban locations. In the rural areas, the uptake is not as what we hope," she explained.

Piling one achievement on another is testament to Dr

Siti Mariah's passion for her job to represent people from all walks of life in Selangor, to be their voice in making sure government policies help them, and her way of making a difference.

Hence, her most successful programme in the five years she assumed office would be the Anak Istimewa Selangor (Anis) initiative, which was established on the very year she was given the seat.

The programme is aimed to improve education for special needs children in Selangor and to safeguard their welfare.

For Dr Siti Mariah, she said she is very glad to see the programme evolving so well and that it has helped more people than she can imagine.

"It has grown from being just a special needs support centre that provides functional diagnosis on special needs children to a kindergarten specialising in special needs childcare services and schooling.

"We even have an academy now for older special needs students where parents, teachers and volunteers for special needs children are involved. We are slowly covering all ages and we hope we are able to open up more centres to benefit more children and families.

"We work closely with many non-government organisations (NGOs) and I am grateful for all the help everyone has contributed to make the programme a success. If possible, we would like to call on local authorities to help out as well, so that the programme can expand to various localities.

"But there is always room to grow and we will always be in need of more funding and help in other aspects because I believe in accessibility and sustainability in every programme I start. It should be able to continue on no matter who takes over next," she said.

For that reason alone, Dr Siti Mariah made a push to set up a foundation, the Yayasan Insan Istimewa (Special People's Foundation, Yanis), to support the Anis programme not only

in terms of funding but also to empower the special needs children and their families.

"They are tasked to look for funding outside of the state government, such as from large corporations through their CSR (corporate social responsibility) programmes because we require lots of funds to expand our activities for the benefit of these special individuals.

"But they are also tasked to make sure empowerment activities are constant," she said.

Many hands make light work

When recalling her first day at work, Dr Siti Mariah remembered feeling a little uncertain as there were no briefings on how things should be done.

"The pathway was also uncertain and I had to carry three portfolios which were rather heavy. There was also no standard way of doing things, so I just learned along the way. It's a journey of continuous learning," she said.

Her toughest moment was when she was given the unity portfolio at the tail end of 2020 after relinquishing the welfare one to V Ganabatirau as it was the first time this component was added to a state executive councillor portfolio.

"I had to start from zero and it is quite challenging because it is a new field for me, unlike medicine or women.

"When we have to come up with unity acts, I have to engage and learn from universities, institutions and even research bodies to make sure the facts are there. Unfortunately, the outcome is not al-

ways to everyone's satisfaction," she said.

However, she credits her amazing team for always being by her side to help her with her work and being the best supporters to champion her causes.

"They are young, enthusiastic and very passionate about the job. I work well with them and thankfully, they help me stay young.

"Without them, I would not be able to achieve all these. I also have great support from many departments outside my office, which has made the work lighter," she said.

Empowered and independent

Being a woman in a position of power is never an easy task. Still, for Dr Siti Mariah, women should learn to be independent and continuously upgrade themselves so as not to be left behind.

"We need to keep learning new skills, to be independent economically, to understand your rights as a woman. We need to know our limitations and then enhance what we lack. But most importantly, we all need to be agents of change. And to do that, we need to start with ourselves," she said.

Dr Siti Mariah understands that there may seem like many steps to take before a woman can get to the top and be on par with men but true equity is never a lonely journey.

"As women, we need to build our own confidence first and foremost, and being a woman, we should support other women. I always believe that there is power in numbers, which is why I seek to enlarge the pool of abled women through the various programmes and initiatives in the state.

"Sadly, we are still failing in political positions but it does not mean it is impossible. We must learn to accept responsibilities and push ourselves to be leaders. Although I understand, as women we carry many weights, such as being caregivers and childcare providers, but do not worry, because this is where the state comes in by offering the necessary support so that women can thrive," she said with a smile.





Reaching out, bridging divides

By AMIN RIDZUAN ISHAK

The doubts and drama in the five days following the country's 15th general elections (GE15) — where no coalition was able to secure a simple majority to be declared the winner — deadened on Nov 24 when Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim took his oath of office as Malaysia's 10th Prime Minister.

With the backing of 148 members of parliament from his own coalition Pakatan Harapan (Harapan) and Barisan Nasional (BN), Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS), Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS), Parti Warisan Sabah (Warisan), Parti Kesejahteraan Demokratik Masyarakat (PKDM), Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (Muda) and Parti Bangsa Malaysia (PBM), Anwar began the task to set things right.

On top of his list was to reduce the country's spending and regain the peo-

ple's trust.

Anwar picked a lean Cabinet of 28 ministers, took on the portfolio of finance, and between Dec 3 and 10, appointed 27 deputies to help fight the good fight.

In the time between February 2020 and November 2022 when Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob successively led the country, a total of 32 ministers and 38 deputies were appointed. Covid-19 was rife at the time, and the people cried foul when more money seemed to go towards the salary of the ministers instead of towards fighting the viral scourge.

Anwar made it known he did not want a salary. Neither did he approve the purchase of a Mercedes S600 for his personal use as the head of government. His ministers followed suit with his austerity measures and agreed to slash their pay by 20 per cent.

And for the first time, a deputy prime

minister was chosen from the East Malaysia bloc, a promise fulfilled by Harapan to the people of Sabah and Sarawak, highlighting Anwar's recognition of the two states as partners.

Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, the deputy president of Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu, assumed that position, and also that of Minister of Plantation and Commodities.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, already the Minister of Rural and Regional Development, was also made a deputy.

Anwar also appointed Petronas advisor Tan Sri Mohd Hassan Marican to head a team of five economic experts to advise the Finance Ministry.

To ensure continued political stability, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the political parties that backed Anwar on Dec 16, resulting in the formation of a Unity Government to represent the ruling coalition at the Parliament's 15th session.

Dewan Rakyat.

As Prime Minister, Anwar did not choose favourites. When flood waters rose and inundated many parts of Kelantan and Terengganu in December, he announced a RM100 million allocation for the people there and for speeding up mitigation projects.

Anwar, too, maintained his appreciation of Sabah and Sarawak as allies and equal partners. This keeps the hope of The Malaysia Agreement of 1963 alive.

When he took over Seri Perdana, the official residence of the prime minister in Putrajaya, Anwar opened its doors to religious programmes in the hope of dousing the flames of racial tension that were ignited by some quarters during GE15.

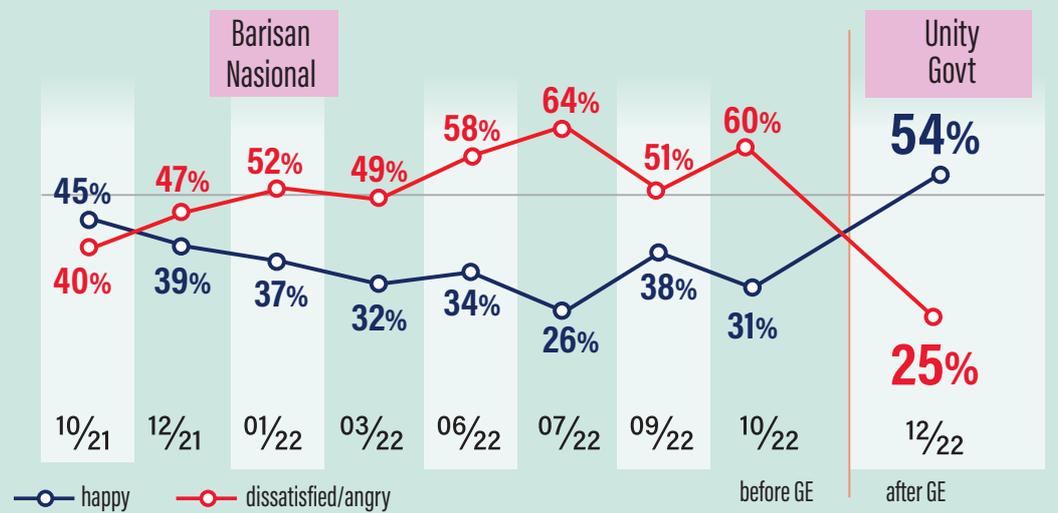
Then, political turmoil in Sabah unfolded. On Jan 6, Datuk Seri Bung Moktar Radin, the BN chief of Sabah, withdrew his support for GRS's Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor as chief minister. Anwar stepped in to defuse the crisis, gave his blessings for Hajiji to remain in the position, and Bung acquiesced.

On Feb 7, Anwar announced the formation of the Unity Government Secretariat to close ranks with opposing minds and ensure policies will be mutually agreed upon. After a 25-year hiatus, he returned to the Umno headquarters to chair the secretariat's first meeting.

Public confidence in Anwar rose. A Merdeka Center survey showed the prime minister receiving a 68 per cent rating approval from 1,209 respondents.

In another survey from Dec 26 to Jan 15, some 54 per cent of respondents said they were satisfied with the performance of the Unity Government.

Government approval rating



Proven support

Although the Opposition did not call for a bloc vote for the newly-minted prime minister to show he had the backing of parliamentarians, Anwar still convened parliament to prove his two-thirds majority.

This stemmed from Muhyiddin's challenge to him to do so, even though the Perikatan Nasional (PN) chairman had earlier refused to do the same when faced with a similar situation at the

Selangor's 15 years of progress

By **IDA NADIRAH IBRAHIM**

FIFTEEN years have passed since Pakatan Harapan (Harapan) — a direct successor to the now defunct Pakatan Rakyat — took over the management of Selangor.

The March 8 general election (GE12) in 2008, dubbed a 'political tsunami', not only brought changes but a breath of fresh air to how Selangor was run.

Pakatan Rakyat's 2008 victory in Selangor was significant as Barisan Nasional (BN) had previously never lost control of the country's most populous and prosperous state.

At the time, Pakatan Rakyat aspired to position Selangor as an alternative federal government, and moving forward 15 years later, the state has indeed successfully placed itself as a model state, with some of its initiatives not only modelled after by other states but by Putrajaya as well.

In the recent Budget 2023 announced on Feb 24, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim introduced several programmes that were inspired by state initiatives, such as Skim Perubatan Madani, which is modelled after the state's Iltizam Selangor Sihat (ISS).

Selangor Journal speaks to current and former Selangor state representatives on the state's prospects in the years to come.

Putting the people first

As the state's ruling coalition, Harapan has implemented a number of reforms, but most importantly, it has established people-centric measures to ensure inclusivity for its citizens of all races and religions.

Former Seri Setia state representative Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, who witnessed Pakatan Rakyat's 2008 victory in Selangor, said that the day was significant as BN not only lost Selangor, but also Penang, and at the federal level, the two-thirds majority.

Nik Nazmi represented the state constituency of Seri Setia from March 2008 to May 2018 and is now the Setiawangsa Member of Parliament.

"I believe Selangor plays an important role because many Malaysians work, live and even have

relatives in the state ... They may be voters elsewhere but they are based here. Previously, it didn't dawn on many people that they were living in a richer state but after Pakatan Rakyat and Harapan, they saw Inisiatif Peduli Rakyat (previously Merakyatkan Ekonomi Selangor) which was people-centric," he told *Selangor Journal*.

Nik Nazmi, who is the current Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Minister, said other reforms brought by the Pakatan Rakyat administration include lengthening the Selangor State Legislative Assembly sitting, which previously sat for only one or two days, enhancing the position of the state Opposition leaders and the role of the select committees, and introducing asset declaration.

"I believe this is important as it shows that all this talk of reforms is not just slogans but also policies that we can implement."

Being visionary

Under Harapan, the state administration has consistently been visionary and diverse.

State executive councillor for socio-economic empowerment, development and caring government V Ganabatirau said that the multiracial element in the Pakatan Rakyat and Harapan state governments shows that it is progressive.

"I have had the honour of serving under three Menteris Besar, all of whom were visionary and championed sustainable development. We can especially see the dynamism in Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari.

"The Harapan government not only thinks of the present, but we think ahead for the younger generations. When we won in 2008, we had Merakyatkan Ekonomi followed by Inisiatif Peduli Rakyat and now Iltizam Selangor Penyayang."

Ganabatirau said that the state has also continued to be the choice of foreign investors, and has kept its position as the largest contributor to the national gross domestic product (GDP).

In year 2008, Selangor contributed the highest percentage share of the national GDP at 22.1 per cent, and in 2021, the state continues to be the largest contributor at 24.8 per cent.

"Under Amirudin's leadership, Selangor has been able to maintain its momentum in development. Amirudin is also successful in drawing up the First Selangor Plan (RS-1), something we don't see the other states doing," said the Sentosa state assemblyman.

Transparency in governance

The incumbent Bukit Lanjan state representative of 15 years, Elizabeth Wong, credits Selangor's style of governance for Malaysia's current level of political maturity.

"Since we took over the state in 2008, we have introduced a number of reforms, including open data, more transparency, implementing the Freedom of Information Enactment 2011 and also building the habit of having more open meetings with stakeholders, which were things you didn't see prior to 2008.

"After 15 years, it has become almost like an institution and I believe it is good that we have managed to introduce these reforms and make it a little more ingrained in the state.

"Of course, we are not perfect and there is a lot of experimentation, a lot of hits and misses but at least we were doing things a different way which culminated in what we have now in the current Federal government. We placed little stones bit by bit to get to what we have today."

Wong said moving forward 10 to 15 years, she hopes that the nation would be a leader in democratic rights and transparency.

"We are on the way ... I'm pleased to say that at least we know what is wrong, what is not right in the system and we are making sure that we are taking steps to overcome those hurdles.

Avoiding complacency

With the recent shifts in the country's political landscape, none of the governing parties can claim to be in a comfortable position, even in Selangor.

As the Selangor state election draws closer, Nik Nazmi cautions that Harapan must not be complacent as voters are likely to cast their ballots based on performance rather than loyalty to the party.

He said that the state must keep introducing fresh faces who can continue the reforms introduced over the years.

"We have achieved a lot. We must own it and be proud of it and tell the story. We must bear in mind that some people may take it for granted but there was a time when we had the Khir Toyo administration and people who still remember it, the older generation, appreciate what Pakatan Rakyat and Harapan have brought because we value the youth, and we value integrity, capability and cultural diversity.

"In 2008, people like the Menteri Besar (Amirudin), myself and Hannah Yeoh contested, we were the fresh faces ... I was 26, Amirudin and Hannah were 28 and 29, respectively. But now we are in the Federal government, so I think it is crucial to always have new faces."

Wong echoed Nik Nazmi and recalled how, prior to 2008, the public had very little say against the administration.

"Back then, everyone was so scared of the government ... they would be scared to protest, scared to even write a letter.

"The younger generation will not realise that a lot has changed because we managed to bring about a different way of governing," she said.



N04 SEKINCHAN

Man on a mission ... and loving it



Sekinchan's natural beauty is what draws the tourists, says Ng

By **SULYN CHONG**

SEKINCHAN state assemblyman Ng Suee Lim has been the mainstay of the constituency since 2004 and hopes to remain a driving force for the small fishing village located an hour away from Selangor's capital city.

Nearing two decades of leadership, Ng has turned a once sleepy town dubbed an 'old folks retirement village' into a tourist destination best known for its reasonably-priced seafood dishes, beautiful and vast paddy fields and the magnificent, old Wishing Tree.

"It has always been my mission to make sure the lives of the people in Sekinchan are sustainable and their economic situation is improved. It has, to a point where the younger generation is now coming back to

open their own business.

"Elevating and enhancing agrotourism, implementing a cashless society, and overseeing the latest route connectivity through the new West Coast Expressway have been a good boost to the town's objectives," said Ng, who is also the Selangor Speaker.

Ng's journey has been successful but he believes he has achieved only about 80 per cent of his mission and that there is more to be done.

The interests of paddy owners are protected and mostly improved under his time as an assemblyman and there are infrastructural improvements as well but not to a point where it feels like another concrete jungle.

"I would like to develop Sekinchan to be known not only nationwide but also worldwide if possible. That is

my aim. But I do not want the area to lose its natural beauty and *kampung* (village) feel because that is the charm of the place.

"I also want to push Sekinchan towards the digitalised age because tourists from anywhere can enjoy their adventures without worry as everything is easily accessible."

Although his term is coming to an end, Ng is determined to continue working for the people without biases to make sure that their lives are comfortable, such as making sure facilities and infrastructure are well-maintained and properly upgraded.

"People always want an assemblyman who is humble, easy to access, friendly and helpful and I try to be all that for the townsfolk of Sekinchan.

"My team and I are always hands-on with issues that crop up and we constantly go to the ground. I also subscribe to an open door policy and am always ready to listen without prejudice," he said.

Most importantly, Ng confided that he truly does enjoy his work even though it requires a lot of his time and patience, and that he will never forget the people's mandate.

"I am very grateful for their support and will always make sure to do my best. Hopefully, I am granted another term.

"But I did not do it all alone as I have an amazing team who is forever helping me, and also tremendous support from the various government-linked companies in my missions," he said, placing his hand to his heart.

N29 SERI SERDANG

Blazing the trail in Seri Serdang

IT may not be her first rodeo as a state assemblyman, but it is her first journey as the representative of the people of Seri Serdang.

In the 2018 state elections, Dr Siti Mariah Mahmud won the state seat under the Pakatan Harapan ticket through Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah) and will be holding on to it until the upcoming state election slated for June this year.

Previously, she represented Kota Raja, Selangor, but made way for Amanah's president Mohamad Sabu to contest there.

Seri Serdang is a Selangor state constituency created in 2003, located under the Puchong parliamentary district.

According to Dr Siti Mariah, when she first stepped into the constituency, she was shocked by its untidy appearance and disorganised infrastructure.

"I used to call Puchong Permai 'yang tak permai' (not picturesque) because the place was very *serabut* (disorganised), with too many illegal buildings and illegal stalls by the roadside which made the place very congested.

"It may be an unfamiliar place to me because it was my first time contesting there but I was determined to change all of it for the better," she said.

After five years of hard work, the constituency has seen upgrades and improvements that has become a testament to Dr Siti Mariah's dedication to her mission.

"There are now areas which we call 'uptowns', a proper *medan selera* (food court) and even a *dataran*!

"Not only that, we have cleared some of the roads by removing the illegal stalls and enlarged them for better traffic flow," she said with pride.



Dr Siti Mariah inspects a drain that is the cause of flash floods in her constituency

However, not everyone is happy with the work Dr Siti Mariah has done because change is uncomfortable and she understands it very well.

"It is part and parcel of the job. Not everyone will be happy when their comforts are taken away. It is unavoidable but we make sure to always find a solution to whatever changes we make," she said.

Aside from enhancing the look of the place, Dr Siti Mariah's most challenging work yet was to ensure land ownership issues among the people of Seri Serdang were resolved.

However, it encountered setbacks for about two years due to the many movement control orders.

"It was not easy to get to the people or the relevant departments then because of all the restrictions.

It took me some time to raise the issue to the Selangor State Executive Council. We had to take measurements, exhibit the results, listen to grievances and everything," she explained.

At the end of the day, no matter what the issue, Dr Siti Mariah chooses to believe in making things right and not leaving liability behind.

"You should always do things right from the start and maintain that so the next person would not have to clean your mess.

"Also, be inclusive when solving problems. Listen to all parties involved to try and find a win-win solution for everyone. Commitment to the job at hand is very important because, without it, nothing gets finished," she advised.

Goalfest matches ahead of quarter-finals



MBSJ FC celebrates after winning 3-0 against FC Spicegals

By **AFIX REDZUAN**

SHAH ALAM - MBSJ FC has advanced to the quarter-final round of the Liga Super Wanita (Women's Super League) after thumping FC Spicegals 3-0 in the last group A match on Feb 26.

The match, which was sponsored by the Football Association of Selangor and took place at Radia Arena A, saw a fourth-minute goal by Nur Afrina followed by another by Steffi Sarge Kaur two minutes later.

Hometeam FC Spicegals fought to

narrow the score but bowed out when Nur Shazreen's successful final-minute attempt brought the number of goals to three.

Meanwhile, FC Swat also advanced after narrowly beating Negeri Sembilan FA 1-0 from a goal by Siti Nabila in the 41st minute.

Also making it to the quarter-finals for Group A is PJKITA, who beat SA United with a brilliant 4-1 score to collect its second point for the championships.

In group B, Henrietta Justine of

UPNM FC twice found joy at the back of the net in the 13th and 19th minute to help her team advance through a convincing 4-0 against Sternes FC.

Another goalfest match for Group B came when second-place Kelana United FC trashed fourth-place SSS Leopard 6-1 in Radia Arena B.

UiTM Lioness also collected a point in the final group match when it beat lowest-ranked PNSB FC 4-1.

All quarter-final matches will kick off at Stadium MBSJ in Subang Jaya on March 4 and 5.

Cheng Hoe: I have faith in Ayrton, Orozco

SHAH ALAM - The head coach of Selangor FC is confident that new imports Ayrton Del Valle and Yohandry Orozco will be in sync with each other and with the team once they settle into their positions.



Tan Cheng Hoe is assured of the two players' ability although they failed to dazzle at their maiden Super League match on Feb 26, according to Berita Harian.

"As their coach, I am optimistic Ayrton and Orozco will come through. As I said earlier they both arrived late to the team. In fact, Orozco has only been here 10 days.

"It was not easy for him. He wasn't in his best form and I had to rest him.

"As for Ayrton, he is still finding his foothold with the team but if I were to scrutinise his game, I would say that he already gave his best," he said.

Cheng Hoe added that he is pleased with the boys' overall game even though it was a hard-fought win over Kelantan United FC through a goal by Yazan Al Arab.

"We are still in the midst of finding compatibility and connection between the players. I admit there are areas that can be improved, like making decisions.

"But from a coach's point of view, I see the commitment that the whole team gives and this is vital for their overall growth."

Pix from Persatuan Bolasepak Selangor Facebook



Messi named 2022 FIFA player

PARIS - Lionel Messi was named FIFA player of the year 2022 on Feb 27 as Argentina scooped all major men's awards after winning a vintage World Cup final last December.

The 35-year-old forward scored two goals in the final against France, with the South Americans emerging triumphant on penalties following a 3-3 draw after extra time in Qatar.

"It's amazing. It was a tremendous year and it is an honour for me to be here tonight and win this award," said Messi, who sat next to France forward and Paris St Germain teammate Kylian Mbappe throughout the ceremony at

Paris's Salle Pleyel.

Mbappe, also nominated for the highly-anticipated award of the night, netted a hat-trick in the World Cup final but his achievement was overshadowed as Messi finally won the most coveted trophy in world football.

"I want to express my thanks to (coach Lionel) Scaloni and my teammates, without them I would not be here," Messi added.

"I achieved a dream I had been hoping for so long. It's a dream for any player, very few people can achieve that and I was lucky enough to do so." - Reuters



WITH billions of ringgit allocated for 2023, many policies relating to the high cost of living, defending the poor, ensuring the sufficient supply of goods, and women empowerment, can finally be rolled out.

The following initiatives were accomplished by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's administration during his first 100 days as the country's 10th Prime Minister.

100 DAYS in facts and figures

RAHMAH CASH AID

- RM1.67 billion in donations
- Phase one assistance from Jan 17

ELECTRICITY

- Old tariffs remain for domestic users, SMEs, and businesses in the agro and food sectors
- Financial impact: almost RM30b

TOLL

- Free for all highway users on Jan 20 and 21, for the Chinese New Year
- Financial impact: RM40m

JOBS

- 50,000 contract jobs under MySTEP in 2023
- GLCs to offer 35,000 vacancies
- Allocations passed in 2023 mini budget

MENU RAHMAH

- Sells meals priced below RM5
- Introduced by the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living
- Has the participation of more than 15,000 food outlets

DISASTER RELIEF

- RM100m for Kelantan, Terengganu to speed up flood mitigation projects, help victims
- RM10,000 to next-of-kin in death cases, RM1,000 to each family affected
- RM400m to Nadma
- RM10,000 to next-of-kin in Batang Kali landslide tragedy, RM1,000 for each family



TELECOMMUNICATIONS

- Launched unity broadband package in February
- RM5-a-month broadband for B40, OKU, veterans, and senior citizens

BASIC FOOD

- Import eggs fulfil demands in the country
- Measures to protect welfare of the people by not pressuring local entrepreneurs
- Restored chicken supplies

WOMEN

- Housewives Social Security Scheme (SKSSR) launched on Dec 1
- Controlled by Socso
- Benefits about 3 million housewives under age 55
- Federal Constitution to award automatic citizenship to children born overseas to Malaysian mothers

EAST MALAYSIA

- Resolved most of the 60 years of overdue claims through the 1963 Malaysia Agreement
- Special grant of RM300m to Sarawak
- The Sabah government empowered to regulate gas supply