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# SELANGOR JOURNAL

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**T**hrough the political ups and downs of 2023, the Unity Government of Selangor has never lost sight of a promise made 15 years ago to protect the welfare of the people and make Selangor an advanced and liveable state for all. As it welcomes a new year, the government has renewed its resolve to open up more jobs and offer

a host of incentives to help Selangor citizens move forward with dignity and confidence.

Empowered by financial strength and a track record of progress, the state is also set to be transformed as the new business gateway into Asean by 2025.

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# A firm champion of books

By **DANIAL DZULKIFLY**

**SHAH ALAM** - Selangor Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari was awarded the prestigious Outstanding Young Leadership Perdana Award for his significant contributions to promoting and enhancing the reading culture in Malaysia.

The award was presented by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the National Book Awards 2023 ceremony, held at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) in Tanjong Malim, Perak, on Dec 21.

Amirudin regarded the top accolade he received as a testament to Selangor's dedication to championing literature, particularly in translating significant works.

He noted that Selangor has translated over 60 book titles of diverse topics from different languages, including through the Inisiatif Buku Darul Ehsan (IBDE), which was established in 2016.

"This is not a personal victory but a recognition for Selangor, which has taken various initiatives to enlighten the people through the translation of great works, discussions, and the organising of book festivals which positively impact readers and publishers.

"In fact, in this term, we began distributing book vouchers to universities in Selangor and the Klang Valley, which will be expanded and enhanced," Amirudin said following the awards ceremony.



The Menteri Besar also said that the award will be an impetus for Selangor to continue producing quality literary works by seasoned authors to nurture a well-informed populace with rational thinking skills.

Amirudin has played a pivotal role in encouraging a reading culture among Malaysians, including by expanding and promoting key events like the Selangor International Book Fair.

Its most recent event, held from Dec 1 to 10 at the Shah Alam City Council (MBSA) Convention Centre, saw the attendance of more than 250,000 visitors.

Meanwhile, the ceremony also saw the Chief Secretary to the Government, Tan Sri Mohd Zuki Ali, accorded the Per-

dana (Premier) Award: Prolific Leadership Figure in Honouring the Nation's Books, by publishing the book titled *G.R.E.A.T!*.

The National Professors Council was recognised as the Best Strategic Partner in Honouring the National Book Industry, while the National Book Council of Malaysia received the Special Award for Driver of the National Book Industry.

The event also saw the launch of *Ensiklopedia: Menyingkap Rahsia Sains dan Teknologi dalam al-Quran (Encyclopedia: Unveiling the Secrets of Science and Technology in the Quran)* by Muhammad Nazir Mohamed Khalid, which celebrates the intersection of faith and science in literary works.

The complete list of award recipients is as follows:

- Perdana Award: Outstanding Young Leadership in Honouring National Book Development - Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari
- Perdana (Premier) Award: Prolific Leadership Figure in Honouring the Nation's Books - Tan Sri Mohd Zuki Ali
- Perdana Award: Eminent Scholar of the Malay World in Honouring the Nation's Books - Datuk Prof Emeritus Osman Bakar
- Prolific Publisher (Government Agency) - Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (Ikim)
- Perdana Special Award: Best Strategic Partner in Honouring the National Book Industry - National Professors Council
- Special Award: Driver of the National Book Industry - National Book Council of Malaysia
- Perdana Award: Best Publisher (Government Department) - Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka
- Prolific Publisher (Non-Governmental Organisation) - Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia Press
- Prolific Publisher (University Publisher) - Pejabat Karang Mengarang UPSI (UPSI publisher)
- Best Luxury Book - *30 Techno Dreams by the Malaysian Technology Development Corporation*
- Prolific Publisher (Private Firm) - Telaga Biru Sdn Bhd

## All Sabak Bernam projects to be vetted for quality

**SABAK BERNAM** - The state government has developed an action plan to examine the suitability of each project under the Sabak Bernam Development Area (Sabda) and the benefits they would bring to the people.

State executive councillor for rural development and unity Datuk Rizam Ismail said development in the area needs to be carried out in an orderly manner to ensure economic spillover to the local population without compromising environmental sustainability.

"An action plan is developed taking into account the study of the feasibility or appropriateness of all projects and initiatives that have been and will be planned in the projects.

"Only projects and initiatives with comprehensive prospects and benefits will be selected to be implemented in Sabda.

"This is important so that all projects add value to the state's development agenda and guarantee local economic prosperity without neglecting the prin-

ciples of the environment, sustainability and good governance," said Rizam, who is also the Sabda chairman, in conjunction with the 2023 Ban Canal Carnival, which was officiated by Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari at Parit 14, Simpang Lima, here, on Dec 10.

Involving the development of 1,317 hectares of land, Sabda includes six major projects, including the Smart Selangor Agro Park in Changkat Menter, the high-tech Fisheries Centre in Sekinchan, and the Air Manis Business Centre.

Development projects in the First Selangor Plan (RS-1) also open up many high-paying job opportunities.

Meanwhile, Rizam, also the Sungai Air Tawar state assemblyman, hopes the Menteri Besar will consider developing his constituency and brand it as a traditional village tourism centre.

"This will be a pilot and cross-sectoral project in raising the historical and cultural value of traditional villages as one of the cultural tourism attractions.

"I also hope that Tourism Selangor

can continue to pay special attention to increasing the promotion of country stays, tourist attractions, culture and unique food in Sabak Bernam via the 'Nak Bercuti? Pusing Selangor Dulu' campaign, he said.

Meanwhile, Rizam expressed hope that the Ban Canal Carnival will be one of the ecotourism events in the annual Sabda calendar.

He added that the 30-kilometre Ban Canal infrastructure not only provides irrigation for rice fields but also serves as a leisure destination for the local community.

"If we look at developed countries such as Europe, most cities or local economic centres are developed by the sea or canals like this.

"Therefore, I see the potential for Ban Canal to become a catalyst for local economic growth under the Sabda initiative," said Rizam.

He also hopes that the carnival will be included in the 2025 Visit Selangor Campaign, thus highlighting the natural

beauty of Sabak Bernam.

"Water sports activities, such as dragon boating, can foster the spirit of unity and teamwork between participants and residents, which aligns with the Gagasan Rumpun Selangor objectives.

"I also want to add another activity, which is a speed boat competition or 'drag racing speed boat', like in Thailand. This way, we may see more people participating in the future."

About 10,000 visitors enlivened the three-day Ban Canal Carnival, held from Dec 8 to 10.

The event featured various exciting activities, including kayak competitions and marathons, boat design, folk sports such as boat racing, boat pulling and decorated rafts.

There was also a running competition, an artificial wall climbing activity, a 'flying fox', a colouring competition for kindergarten children, and a meet-and-greet session with the Selangor FC team.

# Selangor reaps rewards of economic expansion

By **DANIAL DZULKIFLY**

**KLANG** - The state government has collected RM2.571 billion in revenue as of Dec 6, surpassing its initial target of RM2 billion for the year by a handsome 28 per cent.

Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari said this achievement is the product of the state administration's commitment to drive economic growth for the people's benefit.

He was speaking in his loyalty address before the Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah Alhaj, at Balai Rong Seri in Istana Alam Shah, Klang, in conjunction with His Royal Highness' 78th birthday celebration on Dec 11.

"This (success) is a manifestation and proof of Your Royal Highness' government's public service and administrative members' earnest efforts to drive Selangor's economy and enhance revenue for the people's benefit.

"It reflects the investors and people's confidence in the government's attitude and accountability in planning and distributing the state's wealth effectively and in a targeted manner," Amirudin said.

In his address, the Menteri Besar reiterated his steadfast commitment and loyalty to the state Ruler and his duty to govern Selangor efficiently.

He also assured that his administration, consisting of the Unity Government coalition, would uphold the Fed-

eral Constitution and state laws.

Separately, Amirudin highlighted several key state initiatives aimed at economic development, like the Integrated Development Region in South Selangor (Idriss) and the state's commitment to create 100,000 high-paying jobs.

The state government also plans to construct new rail lines linking Klang to Kuala Selangor and Tanjong Karang to Sabak Bernam, enhancing connectivity for residents along the west coast to Klang Valley's major economic hubs.

Similarly, he reiterated Selangor's commitment to form the Greater Klang Valley area, which aims to link four major cities — Petaling Jaya, Subang Jaya, Shah Alam, and Klang — into

a conurbation.

"The Greater Klang Valley aims to unify, coordinate, and standardise the administration of its four cities to facilitate business processes and development, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and simplify its citizens' lives.

"Furthermore, the Greater Klang Valley intends to enable the government to begin the rejuvenation of mature cities to attract investment in new industries focused on digitalisation.

"This initiative is part of a vision to transform the Greater Klang Valley into a resilient urban area, particularly in facing the challenges of climate change, and to develop it into a sustainable and livable city," Amirudin said.

## MB calls for more TVET training to meet market needs

**SHAH ALAM** - The Selangor Skills and Employment Council will be established next year to create new training areas to meet market demands, said Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari.

He said the special committee will gather employers and institutions to estimate the types of jobs needed based on investment sectors currently in the approval process.

Furthermore, its role is to enhance worker productivity while providing opportunities for the state's residents to benefit from existing and upcoming job offers.

"Take programming as an example. This field is very popular and in demand, but some campus programming training is not up-to-date with new technologies.

"When they (students) complete their studies, they must undergo professional training to become good programmers. As such, this is one of the fundamental things we must do next year," Amirudin said.

He was speaking after the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony between the Selangor Technical Skills Development Centre (STDC) and the Education Ministry's Vocational Technical Education and Training (TVET) Division at STDC's campus on Dec 12.

Meanwhile, the Menteri Besar said that there is need to establish a policy encouraging school students to take TVET as an additional curriculum.

"We need to propose a policy to involve children in schools so the TVET fields can

be added to the curriculum, whether it is a policy at the ministry level or an Education Department directive.

"Through this platform, TVET can still be developed and strengthened in line with the establishment of the upcoming committee," Amirudin said.

The STDC has agreed to collaborate with the Education Ministry's TVET Division to develop automation and industrial digitisation curriculum modules.

STDC board chairman Mohd Nazri Noh said it aims to enhance the TVET levels in relevant fields, per current industry needs.

"The collaboration involves incorporating professional certification elements from STDC into the vocational college curriculum as an added value to students' employability and the development of educators in professional certification.

"This includes experts and skills from the industry serving as technical advisors in developing the latest TVET education modules and new TVET programmes in line with current industry needs," he said during the signing ceremony.

The MoU was signed by Nazri, representing STDC, while the ministry was represented by the division's director, Zulkernai Fauzi, witnessed by Amirudin and Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek.

STDC is a technical education institution under the state government that offers various high-quality and impactful skills training courses towards Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0).

## State to create jobs from top-tier investments

**SUBANG JAYA** - Selangor is prepared to attract high-quality investors from various sectors in the upcoming year, said state executive councillor for investment, trade and mobility Ng Sze Han.

He said the strategic move is to strengthen Selangor's economic recovery and create high-paying job opportunities, particularly for the youth.

"Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari has outlined a clear path for Selangor's rapid economic recovery, centred around attracting high-quality investors to the state.

"This initiative would also create more high-paying job prospects," Ng said when attending a friendly football match between Kinrara Football Clinic and Fairview International School at the MBSJ Arena, here on Dec 9.

Ng said that the state government would continue its efforts to host large-scale and impactful events like the Selangor International Business Summit (SIBS) and the Selangor Aviation Show (SAS).

"The two expos have gained significant attention on the global stage, positioning Selangor as a prime investment hub in the Asean region," he said.

The annual trade summit is scheduled to be held twice next year, from July 25 to 27 and Oct 16 to 19, at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

The recent seventh edition of SIBS held in October registered a whopping RM6.12 billion in transaction value, surpassing its target by fourfold, and drew 57,249 visitors.

As for this year's annual air show in September, which was first held in 2021, a total sales value of RM823 million was recorded, with 19,217 attendees, far exceeding the target of 12,000.

Meanwhile, Ng, who is also the Kinrara state assemblyman, highlighted the Kinrara Football Clinic's effort to develop young football talents in the community between the ages of 5 and 17.

He said the clinic currently has 70 participants and has sparked considerable interest among the residents since its inception a year ago.



By NORRASYIDAH ARSHAD

**KLANG** - Raja Permaisuri Agong Tunku Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah was presented the Darjah Kerabat Selangor Yang Amat Dihormati (First Class) (D.K.I) order at the Balairung Seri, Istana Alam Shah, here on Dec 14.

The highest state honour was conferred in conjunction with Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah Al-haj's 78th birthday celebration.

Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah and Tengku Permaisuri Selangor Tengku Permaisuri Norashikin also graced the ceremony.

Others present included Pahang Regent Tengku Mahkota Tengku Hassanal Ibrahim Alam Shah and Raja Muda of Selangor Tengku Amir Shah.

Sultan Sharafuddin also presented the Darjah Kerabat Selangor Yang Amat Dihormati (Second Class) (D.K.II) to member of the Selangor Royal Council, Tengku Datuk Setia Putra Alhaj Tengku Azman Shah Alhaj.

The conferment of the highest order to the Raja Permaisuri Agong was first announced on Dec 11 during the presentation of state awards by Sultan Sharafuddin.

A total of 97 individuals were conferred with various titles and honours.

The award presentation for the highest order, however, was held separately.

The first class order, founded in 1961, is awarded to members of the royal families of Selangor and other states,

# Queen conferred highest state honour

and also to high-ranking state officers and rulers of other countries.

The maximum number of recipients at any one time is 25 people.

Meanwhile, state executive councillor for local government and tourism Dato' Ng Suee Lim, who was conferred the Darjah Kebesaran Dato' Paduka Mahkota Selangor (D.P.M.S.), said he is determined to continue providing his best service to the people.

Expressing gratitude for the honour, he said he aspires to promote Selangor's tourism industry, which has its own uniqueness, like indigenous villages and heritage arts.

"In addition, I will ensure His Royal Highness' aspirations for Selangor continue to progress in terms of investment, local authority administration, and performance improvement," Ng said at Balairung Seri, Istana Alam Shah, here.

The Selangor Ruler bestowed the D.P.M.S. title of Dato' upon nine recipients, including Ng, State Financial Officer Ahmad Fadzli Ahmad Tajuddin, and Selangor police chief Datuk Hussein Omar Khan.



Meanwhile, Subang Jaya City Council mayor Datuk Mohd Fauzi Mohd Yatim expressed gratitude for being awarded the Darjah Kebesaran Dato' - Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah (D.S.I.S.).

"I have served in Selangor for 12 years, and this is a recognition and a motivator to continue contributing and

giving the best to the Selangor government.

"At MBSJ, the administration always prioritises His Royal Highness' directives, including those related to the importance of cleanliness and infrastructure maintenance to prevent floods," he said.

## Selangor ready to compete at regional level: Exco

**SHAH ALAM** - Having consistently been Malaysia's largest economic contributor, Selangor is now primed and ready to compete at the regional level against other Asean states.

State executive councillor Ng Sze Han said as the individual responsible for formulating investment and trade strategies and

policies, he believes Selangor now has a strong foundation in terms of its trade and industrial ecosystems.

He said this is evidenced in the organisation of this year's Selangor International Business Summit (SIBS) and Selangor Aviation Show (SAS), which recorded a combined potential trans-

action value of about RM7 billion, involving both large corporations and small and medium enterprises.

"What's more important is that we can realise these investments and strive for the transfer of technology that can benefit the people.

"Today, the Selangor government is ready to turn the state into a place where its people and workers can compete more effectively at the Asean level and take advantage of opportunities provided by the government."

Ng said this to *Selangorkini* in sharing his feedback as a state executive councillor, in conjunction with the state government's 100 days in power on Dec 1.

The Selangor executive councillors took their oath of office at the Istana Alam Shah, Klang, on Aug 21, after securing victory in the state election nine days earlier.

Izham Hashim, who is in charge of infrastructure and agriculture, said this term, he is focusing on improving the stability of slopes in the state, which requires some time to be completed.

He added that attention is also given to addressing the issues of climate change, which has the potential to cause floods and droughts, and food security.

"No time will be wasted as we look to expand and improve existing initiatives," he said.

For state executive councillor for local government and tourism Ng Suee Lim, the primary focus now is to further empower the nine local councils in Selangor and identify a win-win solution for illegal factory operations here.

The latter, he said, will also help generate revenue for the state government and local councils.

Jamaliah Jamaluddin, who oversees the public health and environment portfolios, said she plans to improve the existing Iltizam Selangor Sihat programme and increase the number of environmental and green technology initiatives.

She noted that the state government is setting up a centre for climate change adaptation.

Meanwhile, state executive councillor for women empowerment and welfare Anfaal Saari pointed out that under her portfolio, the state government will roll out the Selangor Care Economy Action Framework 2024-2028 next year.

Her committee also launched the MamaKerja incentive, which provided RM1,000 in financial aid to 5,000 working women to subsidise the cost of childcare and was one of the five 100-day election pledges made by Pakatan Harapan before the state polls.

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# Stop divisive politics, Sultan tells state leaders

By FATHI ARIS OMAR

**A**BOVE and beyond political party disputes, the Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah Alhaj, prioritises unity and harmony in the lives of the common people, with an earnest rejection of divisive politics and the exploitation of religion.

Repeatedly, His Royal Highness delivers royal decrees urging political leaders to avoid divisive politics. Throughout this year, in all major events, Sultan Sharafuddin has tirelessly reminded politicians about this.

During the royal address at the opening of the Selangor State Legislative Assembly in March, its dissolution in June, and during the state leadership's appointment ceremony following the 15th Selangor Election in August, the Ruler's message was crystal clear.

His Royal Highness advised political leaders not to "play on issues relating to religion and provoke racial and other sensitive issues which can damage harmony and unity".

As partisan political competition has intensified in recent years, Sultan Sharafuddin's advice is akin to pearls of wisdom reminding the complacent and the ignorant.

In the period leading up to the 15th general election (in November last year), His Royal Highness said leaders who betray, deceive, and abuse power to accumulate personal wealth would be hated by the people as they bring destruction upon the nation.

"Bad leaders are the ruin of nations (and) as the poets say, 'if the water is murky at the source, it, too, will be murky downstream' (jika keruh air di hulu, maka keruhlah ia di hilir)," said Sultan Sharafuddin in a Facebook post uploaded by the Selangor Royal Office a month before the 15th general elections on Nov 19, last year.

When speaking at the opening of the final session of the 14th State Legislative Assembly, the Ruler expressed discomfort with leaders who use houses of worship for party politics, leading to disputes.

"I am most concerned about such a culture; if not curbed, it will continue to divide the Muslim community, especially the Malays.

"As the state election in Selangor approaches this year, I want to remind the Selangor Islamic Religious Council to is-



sue directives from time to time so that Muslims, especially politicians, do not turn mosques and suraus into stages for speeches and campaigns," said His Royal Highness in front of the 56 state assemblymen on March 13.

A day before departing for Saudi Arabia for a religious pilgrimage on June 20, Sultan Sharafuddin continued to emphasise harmonious politics, which nurture unity. During the assembly's dissolution at Istana Alam Shah, His Royal Highness stated:

"I want to stress that candidates and their supporters must not play on issues relating to religion that will lead to racial discord or other sensitive issues that can damage the harmonious ties and unity of the people."

Nonetheless, there remain certain leaders who continue to stoke the fires of racial hatred long after the conclusion of the elections in the six states, including Selangor, on Aug 12.

## Healing the divide

Subsequently, in his capacity as the National Council for Islamic Religious

Affairs' (MKI) chairman, Sultan Sharafuddin issued a special statement on Sept 12, following the two by-elections held in Johor on Sept 9.

"The country will regress in all aspects of life if political leaders foster ethnic polarisation and inflame the people's feelings in the name of race and religion.

"People influenced by the instigation of some leaders who promote racial and religious politics may potentially trigger feelings of suspicion, conflict, disagreement, and division.

"Excessive polarisation will lead to implications which breed elements of radicalism and extremism within society, which could threaten national security," said the Ruler.

His Royal Highness even suggested that the boundaries and differences between races and religions could be overcome by organising various programmes to close the gap and avoid existing negative prejudices.

Sultan Sharafuddin explained that it was due to such "increasingly apparent" attempts at causing division that prompted a segment of the population

to appeal to the Malay Rulers to intervene in safeguarding the people's peace and security.

His Royal Highness' statement is a stronger call than the decree issued during the Menteri Besar and Selangor State Executive Council members' appointment ceremony on Aug 21.

"I observe that politics has greatly divided our unity as fellow Muslims with the practice of narrow political ideologies — enough of such practices.

"We need to move forward and bring about a change in how we do politics and think. Now that the elections are over, let us come together to strengthen relationships regardless of religion, race, and political beliefs.

"We must unite again to rebuild Malaysia, and the state of Selangor in particular," said the Ruler from the Istana Alam Shah throne in Klang.

Such statements and remarks are indicative of how concerned the Sultan of Selangor is about harmony and unity. Within a span of just six months this year, His Royal Highness has continually emphasised the importance of protecting the people's well-being.

## Startups learn from Hangzhou's best

**SHAH ALAM** - The Selangor E-Commerce Xccelerator Programme 2023's (ECX23) recent business trip to Hangzhou, China, underscored the state's commitment to propelling Malaysian startups towards global recognition and success.

Its organiser, Selangor Information Technology and Digital Economy Corporation (Sidec), said this in a statement on Dec 13, following its strategic trip to the capital of Zhejiang province.

"This initiative not only reflects Selangor's dedication to nurturing local businesses but also positions the ECX23 programme as a trailblazer in catalysing global success for Malaysian enterprises," it said.

The five companies from the ECX23 programme that were chosen to participate in the trip were Pastels Group Sdn Bhd, Shapee Trading & Distribution (M) Sdn Bhd, Sonobee Ultrasound Sdn Bhd, Nori Malaysia Sdn Bhd, and Big Bath Sdn Bhd.

"This mission was a golden opportunity for these premier Malaysian companies to gain exposure to international e-commerce best practices, scaling techniques and insights into globally recognised brands," said Sidec chief executive officer Yong Kai Ping of the week-long mission from Dec 3 to 9.

"They also experienced a deep dive into Hangzhou's innovative culture and networked with prominent entrepreneurs and business leaders," he added.

The chosen location for the business trip, often dubbed the 'Silicon Valley of China', is a renowned hub for e-commerce and is home to 57 Fortune Global 500 companies, including Alibaba.

According to Sidec, among the highlights of the trip were visits to various innovation and technology hubs such as the China Artificial Intelligence Town, Dream Town Hangzhou, the Hangzhou Future Sci-Tech City Planning Exhibition Hall, the Alibaba Museum, Freshippo, Sunon Furniture, VTO Livestream (Mosquito Club), Yowant Network, the Hangzhou Intellectual Property Incubation Park, and Shenhow Technologies.

The trip exposed participants to cutting-edge practices in e-commerce, big data, cloud computing, the Internet of Things (IoT), chip design, and artificial intelligence, allowing them to witness over 1,000 innovation projects firsthand, it added.

# Invest Selangor gets a royal patron

By SELANGOR JOURNAL TEAM

**SHAH ALAM** - Raja Muda of Selangor Tengku Amir Shah has been appointed Invest Selangor Bhd's (Invest Selangor) first royal patron.

In a statement on Dec 14, the state subsidiary said the appointment is in line with the company's aspiration to further enhance Selangor's profile at the international level.

The statement quoted Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari as saying that His Highness' involvement in promoting state investments aligns with the administration's vision to sustainably improve the economy in terms of resources and social development.

"The Raja Muda of Selangor's consent to become the royal patron is a grand recognition and the highest form of encouragement for Invest Selangor to multiply its efforts to attract more high-quality domestic and international investments to establish their presence here.

"This is crucial to provide more high-paying job opportunities for Selangor residents," he said.

Invest Selangor chief executive officer Dato' Hasan Azhari Idris said the patronage of Tengku Amir Shah will in-

vigorate and strengthen the company's long-term strategies and aspirations to promote Selangor as the premier investment destination in Southeast Asia.

"We are proud that His Highness has consented to accept this appointment," he said.

"This is a sign of his highest recognition towards our efforts to continue innovating and contributing to the economic development of the state."

Meanwhile, Invest Selangor said the state consistently looks to adopt new approaches to maintain its position as a leading investment destination in the region.

It said taking proactive measures like implementing competitive investment strategies, infrastructure improvements, human capital development, and investment promotions ensures the sustainability of the state's efforts in attracting investors and main-

taining its competitiveness.

"The full support from various stakeholders, especially investors, is a crucial element in ensuring Selangor's success amid competition with other developing states in Malaysia," it said.

Invest Selangor is the state government's primary agency that provides information and advisory services to potential and existing investors and assists in establishing operations in Selangor.

Since its inception, Invest Selangor has attracted more than RM218.3 billion in manufacturing investments involving 6,496 projects, indirectly creating 476,886 jobs.



## Kumpulan Semesta among top Asean firms for mineral mining

**SHAH ALAM** - Kumpulan Semesta Sdn Bhd has been recognised as one of the top three companies in the region for 'Best Practices in Non-Metallic Mineral Mining' at the 3rd Asean Mineral Awards 2023, held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, recently.

The state subsidiary, which is a key player in the mining sector, was nominated to represent Malaysia to compete with 16 mining companies from the Southeast Asian region.

Its achievement proves the firm's ability to comprehensively manage on-site rock and mineral mining operations, demonstrating adherence to standards and procedures established by state authorities, Federal administration, as well as with international standards.

The recognition is also the result of the collaborative efforts of various entities, including the Selangor Land and Mines Office, the District and Land Of-

fice, the Mineral and Geoscience Department, the Environment Department, the Selangor Water Management Authority, the Selangor Irrigation and Drainage Department, and various other state government agencies.

The Asean Mineral Awards is a recognition bestowed upon practitioners in the mining and quarrying industry within the Asean region.

It is an initiative under the Asean Minerals Cooperation Action Plan, which was agreed upon within the framework of the Asean Senior Officials Meeting in Minerals and Asean Ministerial Meeting on Minerals (AMMin).

Kumpulan Semesta managing director and chief executive officer Abdul Rahman Ishak was present to receive the award during an AMMin gala dinner at the Sokha Phnom Penh Hotel on Nov 23.

Rahman expressed his gratitude to

Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari for his consistent support and trust in Kumpulan Semesta.

"This success is achievable thanks to the collective support from various government agencies and departments, as well as the dedicated staff who consistently serve as the backbone of the company," he said.

Previously, at the 2nd Asean Mineral Awards in 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand, Kumpulan Semesta won the 'Best Practices in Sustainable Mineral Development (Non-Metallic Minerals Distribution)' category.

Established in 2008, Kumpulan Semesta is a company owned by the Selangor government that is responsible for managing the extraction, production, distribution and sale of sand, rock materials and mineral resources, while promoting sustainable mineral mining operations in the state.



# From waste to watts

By **DANIAL DZULKIFLY**

**S**ELANGOR is leading the way in renewable energy and sustainable environmental practices by implementing sustainable development projects, as outlined in the First Selangor Plan (RS-1) by Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari.

The state's recent focus on waste-to-energy (WTE) projects and solar energy demonstrates a commitment to creating an innovative, livable, and prosperous state by 2025.

A significant development is the waste-to-energy facility in Jeram, launched in October. This project represents a shift from traditional waste management methods, such as reliance on landfills, to more sustainable practices.

During the launch, Amirudin emphasised the need to evolve from the outdated practice of creating new landfills for waste management.

"The conventional approach has not only prolonged negative impacts on the environment but also fails to meet future waste management needs," he said.

This facility marks a new era of sustainability, where waste is viewed as a valuable resource for generating energy, reducing reliance on traditional power sources, and fostering a new industry while allowing the environment to recuperate.

Selangor, which contributes around

7,000 tonnes of the approximately 38,000 tonnes of solid waste generated daily in Malaysia, faces the challenge of limited landfill lifespan. Amirudin highlighted the need for sustainable components to extend the life of existing landfill sites.

"If we continue with traditional methods, our existing landfill sites would only last for another three to four years, forcing us to find new landfill locations. This would not only waste land resources but also raise environmental concerns," he said.

## Green facilities

The Jeram WTE facility, a joint venture between Worldwide Holdings Bhd (Worldwide Holdings) and Shanghai Electric, is set to process 3,000 tons of solid waste daily, generating about 50 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy. The project is expected to be completed by 2026.

Additionally, Worldwide Holdings is planning to develop another WTE plant at the Tanjung Dua Belas Integrated Solid Waste Management Centre in Kuala Langat.

This new facility is designed to handle 1,800 tons of solid waste daily, producing 38 MW of electricity.

Amirudin also reiterated that Selangor's proactive steps in renewable energy and environmental sustainability are not only addressing current waste management challenges

but also paving the way for a greener and more sustainable future.

## Help from the sun

Effort towards renewable energy is further exemplified by Pengurusan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd's Net Zero Energy Vision 2040.

Launched in November 2023 by Amirudin, this ambitious strategy outlines the transition of the state's water management authority to renewable energy sources.

This aligns with the state's goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2040 and supports Malaysia's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050.

This transition to renewable energy is not only environmentally significant but also economically beneficial.

For instance, Air Selangor's move to renewable energy sources for its water treatment plants will result in substantial cost savings.

The monthly electricity cost for operating the Sungai Selangor Phase One, Two, and Three water treatment plants (WTPs) amounts to RM32.3 million, translating to RM387.6 million annually.

"The shift to renewable energy will enable Air Selangor to save these costs, which can be redirected towards upgrading infrastructure such as pipes and pumps in the WTPs," Amirudin said.

The first phase of this transition has already begun, with the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, more

familiarly known as solar panels, at several WTPs.

The second phase, set to run from 2025 to 2029, aims to increase renewable energy usage significantly.

The final phase, stretching from 2030 to 2040, will focus on achieving net-zero status for all of Air Selangor's assets, completing the full shift to renewable energy sources.

## Investing in the future

Amirudin has also set an ambitious target for Selangor to make a substantial contribution to Malaysia's renewable energy sector, with plans to generate 1 to 1.5 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy in the coming years.

This initiative forms a crucial part of the Malaysia-United Arab Emirates partnership, which aims to develop 10 GW of renewable energy capacity, valued at US\$8 billion (approximately RM37.76 billion), across Malaysia by 2025.

Selangor's commitment to renewable energy is further highlighted by its involvement in various green technology projects through Worldwide Holdings Bhd, a subsidiary of the state.

"We are currently engaged in 10 pilot projects worth RM10 billion, focusing on various sustainable energy sources. These include developments in solar power, mini hydro plants, and hydrogen production," Amirudin said during a state assembly sitting on Nov 14.

By YASMIN RAMLAN

Selangor has made positive strides towards realising its vision as the gateway to Asean by achieving another milestone in its economic growth.

Earlier in the year, the latest official data revealed that the state made its highest-ever contribution to Malaysia's national gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022, at 25.5 per cent.

For the last five decades, Selangor has steadfastly maintained its position as Malaysia's pivotal manufacturing hub, encompassing industries such as automotive, electrical and electronics, logistic services, aerospace and pharmaceuticals.

The driving forces behind its economic growth are the two main sectors, manufacturing and services, which it aims for further expansion in the coming years.

According to Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz, Selangor's total trade rose by 14.2 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) to RM806.3 billion in the first half of this year (1H2023) from RM706.02 billion in 1H2022.

At the same time, the state's exports rose 9.1 per cent y-o-y to RM360.04 per cent from RM330.1 billion in 1H2022, signifying that Selangor has continued to maintain its positive momentum from 2021 to June 2023.

#### Double success

The state's two primary international events this year, the Selangor International Business Summit (SIBS) and the Selangor

Aviation Show (SAS), sealed its reputation as a venue capable of attracting investors and key economic stakeholders in the Asean region.

The seventh edition of SIBS 2023, which took place from Oct 19 to 22, surpassed expectations when it brought in a potential transaction value of RM6.12 billion, quadrupling its initial target.

Thirty-four memorandums of understanding (MOUs) were signed across various industry subsectors.

Due to the overwhelming response, the state government has decided to organise the event biannually from next year, where it is scheduled to run from July 25 to 27 and Oct 17 to 19.

Meanwhile, at SAS 2023, the 28 MOUs signed doubled that of the previous year.

The inked agreements encompass collaborations across various subsectors of the aerospace industry, with a potential transaction value of roughly RM823 million.

#### Mega projects

Selangor's strategic economic position has always made it a popular choice for Malaysians seeking better employment opportunities. Its rapidly-increasing population means it is faced with additional challenges to provide adequate jobs.

In the first quarter (Q1) of 2023, however, Selangor was able to lower its unemployment rate to 2.6 per cent compared to 2.9 per cent in the previous year.

The drop in its unemployment figures is a positive development in line with

# Harnessing Selangor's economic potential



Malaysia's unemployment target rate of 3 per cent for next year, compared to the 3.4 per cent recorded this year.

To maintain its economic momentum, as well as prioritise the well-being of the people in Selangor, Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari has announced a budget allocation of RM2.53 billion for 2024.

With the theme 'Independent Selangor: Driving Progress, Fostering Unity,' it sets among its key priorities the goal of being debt-free by 2024.

Other strategic initiatives of the state include the ongoing implementation of the First Selangor Plan (RS-1) 2021-2025, which, according to Malaysia Industrial Development Finance Berhad (MIDF), is expected to promote the state's GDP growth to above 4.5 per cent next year.

The state government has identified nine high-impact projects focusing on industries that will boost Selangor's economic development. They include an emphasis on ports and logistics, the digital economy, aerospace, electrical and electronics, mechanical and

engineering, halal, automotive, life sciences, tourism, and agrotechnology.

Among them are the Integrated Development Region in South Selangor (Idriss), the Sabak Bernam Development Area (Sabda), and the Selangor Maritime Gateway (SMG).

#### Room for growth

Commenting on the RS-1, KSI Strategic Institute advisor Prof Anthony Dass emphasised how the state's high-impact projects would play a critical role for Malaysia.

"With various pro-growth initiatives, the state can expand beyond 4.5 per cent in 2024. The 2024 Selangor Budget and RS-1 targets are crucial for Malaysia due to the golden state's economic size," the Unitar International University lecturer told *Selangor Journal* recently.

According to economist Prof Barjoyai Bardai, Selangor is a well-performing state based on its overall economic performance in 2022 and 2023, and the industrial sector has played a pivotal

role in contributing to its performance. "Its substantial contribution to exports is noteworthy, and Selangor has maintained its status as an industrial hub for over 50 years.

"However, there hasn't been a significant quantum leap in Selangor's development," he said.

According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), Penang, Johor, and Selangor made up 70.5 per cent of Malaysia's total exports in April 2023, with Penang remaining as the top exporter with a share of 31.5 per cent, followed by Johor at 21.7 per cent, Selangor (17.3 per cent), Sarawak (7 per cent), and Kedah (4.6 per cent).

Dass emphasised that the state's economic resilience lies in the strength of its diversified manufacturing, construction, and services sectors, and huge consumer demand.

He also pointed out the importance of the state's focus on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices.

"Positive impact is expected following their focus on basic infrastructure,



including roads, bridges and water-related projects. This includes the emphasis on environmental, social and governance practices, and the emphasis on reducing carbon footprint will support the economy," he said.

Nevertheless, both Barjoyai and Dass opined that there is also room for improvement, and suggested that Selangor focus on pressing issues aligned with current needs.

"As an industrial hub, Selangor must accelerate and compel industries to transition to Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0) because failure to do so could lead to a stagnant workforce scenario, hindering salary progression, especially among unskilled employees," said Barjoyai.

He pointed out that Malaysia, in general, has lagged in making swift advancements, particularly in transitioning to IR4.0 and IR5.0, compared to countries like Japan, Taiwan, and Germany, which are currently implementing IR5.0.

"To overcome this, the industrial sector needs to take the lead by embracing IR4.0 and IR5.0," he said, recommending that Selangor could serve as a pioneer in this and set an example for other states in Malaysia.

Dass, on the other hand, touched on the need for Selangor to strengthen its strategies, especially on technology, regional cooperation, and attracting high-quality investments in preparation

#### Food and tech

Barjoyai suggested that the state government focus on micro, small, and medium entrepreneurs, groups that the 12th Malaysia Plan targets, as they are expected to contribute 45 per cent to the country's GDP.

"Considering the need for preparedness in IR4.0 and IR5.0, perhaps Selangor could explore establishing an excellence centre, dedicated to providing entrepreneurs with the necessary training and exposure to advanced technologies.

"The state government can also encourage collaborations with funding institutions or financial companies that could further facilitate investments in such initiatives and allow entrepreneurs to stay abreast of cutting-edge technologies," he said.

Meanwhile, Dass suggested an increase in food production, especially the supply of rice, fish and meat, amid the global food supply crisis, anticipating a potentially prolonged crisis period.

During the presentation of the budget, Amirudin announced the state government's commitment to allocate RM50 million to safeguard food security for the expanding population of 7.2 million in Selangor.

Of this sum, RM40 million is reserved for a strategic collaboration with the Selangor Agricultural Development Corporation (PKPS).







# When race hinders reform

By **DANIAL DZULKIFLY**

**U**NDER the leadership of Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari, the Selangor government is confronted with the complex challenge of gaining the Malay electorate's trust, especially in representing their interests beyond mere economic betterment.

While Selangor had, in 2022, contributed a significant 25.5 per cent of the gross domestic product to Malaysia's economy, Amirudin's Unity Government must navigate the political landscape shaped by the rising influence of Perikatan Nasional (PN).

In the August state elections, PN secured 22 seats, closely trailing the government's 34, denying the Pakatan Harapan (Harapan) and Barisan Nasional (BN) pact of a two-thirds majority of 38 out of 56 seats.

According to political analysts, the support for PN largely stems from a broader Malay disenchantment with the Unity Government, rather than specific discontent with state policies.

Public sentiment generally reflects satisfaction with the state's governance but harbours scepticism towards the Federal leadership under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research (NASR) senior fellow Azmi Hasan pointed out that the Selangor administration's struggles are partly due to the 'green wave', a term coined to reflect the discontent among the Malay majority with the Federal government, which has indirectly affected the state government's standing.

Azmi also observed that Umno, traditionally a strong advocate of Malay rights, appears weakened and less assertive on the issue than PN.

"Umno is perceived as weak at the state level, a situation worsened by PN's focus on nativist politics," he said.

In the recent state election, Umno contested 12 seats but only managed to secure two, namely Sungai Air Tawar, won by Datuk Rizam Ismail, and Dusun Tua, won by Datuk Johan Abdul Aziz.

Rizam pulled an upset for his seat, beating his PN opponent Mohamad Zaidi Selamat by a majority of 846 votes despite many political observers projecting at the time that the seat, along with all other seats in northern Selangor, would be swept by the 'green wave'.

As for Johan, many analysts opined that he had won the seat thanks to the collaboration between Umno and DAP, the first electoral victory for the enemies-turned-political allies.

It is also important to note that the Dusun Tua seat was traditionally contested and held by the DAP.

Another political analyst, senior fellow at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs Oh Ei Sun, also concurred with Azmi on the Amirudin government's challenges stemming from eroded Malay trust in the Federal government.

"Generally, the whole Unity Government's viability is at stake, and not particularly his (Amirudin) credibility. If anything, it would be the other way around, that he is a victim of the mounting green wave that is set to gobble up this country, despite Selangor's decent record for development.

"For green wave supporters, religiosity rather than development seems to be prioritised," he said.

## Trickle-down effect

Both Oh and Azmi also agreed that Federal politics play an important role

in public perception and the trust given to the Selangor state administration.

"It is not so much to do with state politics. The issue lies with politics at the Federal level that impact the public's trust towards the state administration as a whole," said Azmi.

Following the formation of the Unity Government, the use of racial and religious rhetoric has escalated, with detractors frequently using them as ammunition when discussing economic issues.

Government parliamentarians frequently find themselves needing to debunk misinformation while maintaining a level-headed approach.

However, they often appear to be on the defensive, reacting to these provocations rather than proactively addressing and navigating around these complex issues.

Following the recent decision of four opposition members from Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) to shift their support to Anwar, the verbal clashes in Parliament have intensified even more.

Many opposition members have become increasingly vocal against Anwar's administration, using racial and religious issues as political leverage.

Despite the Unity Government now garnering more than a two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat, the feelings of discontent at the Federal level will no doubt trickle down to any state administration aligned with the Unity Government, including Selangor.

### Empowering Umno

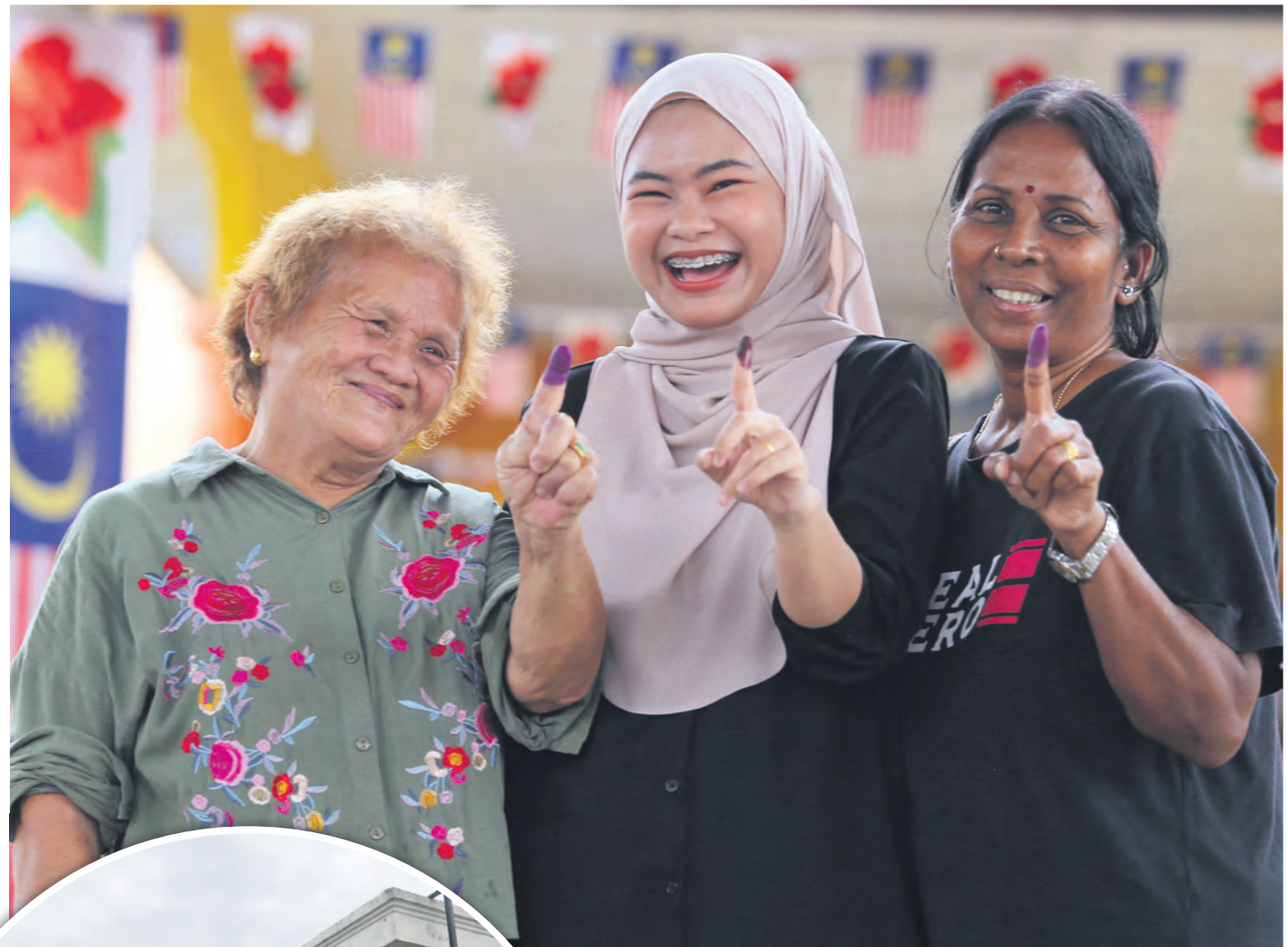
The current political challenge for both Anwar and Amirudin is to effectively communicate to the Malay community that their respective levels of government are genuinely committed to safeguarding their interests, particularly in relation to their native rights, as outlined in the Federal Constitution.

This task is increasingly vital as many political observers have noted a trend towards greater religiosity within the Malay community.

There is a pressing need for both Anwar and Amirudin to demonstrate a strong commitment to empowering Islam and addressing the religious concerns of the community.

To this effect, Azmi suggested that among the first key initiatives that Amirudin can do is to take cues from Anwar's approach in providing Umno with key positions within his administrative line-up.

He said this could be done by empowering Umno within the state to help it regain Malay support, despite their minimal representation in the



state assembly and perceived weakness to challenge DAP.

Drawing parallels with the Federal government, Azmi suggested, "Amirudin must learn from Anwar's strategy of empowering Umno by assigning them key ministries in the Cabinet reshuffle.

"This approach is vital for Selangor too, despite Umno's minimal representation with just two seats in the state assembly," he said.

The recent Cabinet reshuffle includes the portfolios of Minister of Finance II (assigned to Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan), Minister of Plantation and Commodities (to Datuk Seri Johari

Ghani), Minister of Health (to Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad), Minister of Digital (to Gobind Singh Deo), and Minister of Human Resources (to Steven Sim).

Umno's Johari was re-appointed into the Federal cabinet, while Datuk Seri Khaled Nordin and Datuk Seri Zambry Abdul Kadri were given the Defence and Higher Education portfolios, respectively.

Amirudin and his team, comprising state executive councillors and government backbenchers, often highlight Selangor's development and economic achievements to attract voters.

Their strategy primarily revolves around key policies like the First Selangor Plan or RS-1 and major development initiatives such as the Sabak Bernam Development Area (Sabda), the Integrated Development Region in South Selangor (Idriss), and the Selangor Maritime Gateway (SMG).

A significant part of Amirudin's political narrative focuses on the substantial investments attracted by the state, Selangor's notable contribution to the national economy, and the state's commitment to social programs.

Amirudin contrasts his administra-

tion's achievements with those of his predecessor, Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali, who is now an opposition leader in the state, representing PN. This comparison is often used to underscore the current administration's focus on social welfare and economic progress.

However the strategy was deemed ineffective to woo the Malays, many of whom still look for a stronger representation in the state and Federal governments.

Oh stated that while there are those who are very progressive and reform-minded for whom growth and the improvement of livelihoods are top sociopolitical priorities, nativist concerns remain a pivotal political leverage.

This is especially true for rural Malays, whose support has massively eroded, even for a Malay-based party like Umno.

"There is also a mounting green-wave demographic cohort who would prioritise spiritual concerns above all else.

"Traditionally, one would advocate improving the livelihoods of those in the rural areas as a sure bet to secure that sizable vote bank.

"Increasingly, however, the spiritual dimension seems to be creeping ever more profoundly into rural and urban mindsets, even in advanced states like Selangor," he said.



# Putting the people first

By YASMIN RAMLAN

**I**N fewer than 100 days, the Selangor government led by Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari has delivered on the promises made by Pakatan Harapan (Harapan) and its new political ally Barisan Nasional (BN) during the Selangor state polls on Aug 12.

The swift progress is proof of the effective and thorough realisation of the 'Kita Selangor' manifesto, which has outlined 53 initiatives under five pledges for the next five years. The initiatives will be carried out through collaborative efforts between the Selangor government and BN.

The key pledges are fostering a robust economy and providing quality education as catalysts for high-income employment opportunities; religion as a beacon and inspiration for a dignified life in Selangor; good and efficient government services; ensuring sustainable, comfortable and livable development; and establishing Selangor as a compassionate state dedicated to safeguarding the interests of its people.

## The five pledges are:

- an annual incentive of RM1,000 for 5,000 working mothers to ease their financial burden in paying for education and nurseries for their children

- exemption of assessment rates for village houses and low-cost houses
- book vouchers worth RM200 for 1,000 college students
- increase in the monthly allowances for mosque committee leaders (imam, bilal, siak, and nazir), and
- an incentive of RM1,000 to farmers and fishermen in the state to cover their expenses including for seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides.

During its launch in early August, Amirudin, who is also the Sungai Tua state assemblyman, said the 'Kita Selangor: Five Commitments to Continue Five Years of Excellence in Selangor' pledge was not merely a populist promise, but rather a commitment made for immediate implementation should his administration be given the mandate at the state elections.

In the elections, Harapan secured 32 seats out of the 44 contested, while its coalition partner Barisan Nasional won two out of the 12 contested. Perikatan Nasional, meanwhile, won 22 seats.

Fewer than two months after coming into power, Selangor had implemented three of its five election pledges, namely the assessment tax exemptions for village homes and low-cost housing, the increase in allowances for mosque administrators, and the incentives to farmers and fishermen.

Meanwhile, the other two pledges to provide book vouchers to university

students and cover childcare costs for working mothers were implemented in November.

## Offering employment

One of the prominent commitments under the first pledge is the creation of 100,000 high-paying jobs to position Selangor as the primary investment hub in Southeast Asia.

This will be done through the establishment of a third port at Pulau Carey in collaboration with the Federal government, and the development of three new townships in Sepang, Sabak Bernam, and along Sungai Klang.

"As part of the offer (to create employment opportunities), our main focus will be on establishing a high-income economy by generating 100,000 high-paying jobs within the state over the next five years.

"This isn't merely an empty promise; it's an achievable objective, considering that the state administration has already successfully created around 89,000 well-paying jobs in the past five years," Amirudin said during the manifesto launch at Dewan Raja Muda Musa on July 31.

Another 100-day pledge, to offer more childcare incentives to working mothers, has been named the MamaKerja Incentive and serves to increase their participation in the workforce and recognise their role in helping to build

the state's economy.

MamaKerja provides RM1,000 in financial aid to 5,000 working mothers to subsidise the cost of childcare, which will be implemented by the state Women Empowerment, Welfare and Care Economy Committee.

According to state executive councillor for women empowerment and welfare Anfaal Saari, the initiative shows that the state values working women, and this has been pivotal in establishing the Care Economy portfolio this term.

Commencing on Nov 1, MamaKerja met its target of identifying 5,000 recipients in just six days.

Meanwhile, in November, Amirudin officially launched the Kita Selangor book voucher initiative, 76 days after he was sworn in for his second term as the Menteri Besar.

A total of 1,000 students at public and private universities in the state received the Kita Selangor e-vouchers worth RM200 each from Menteri Besar Selangor (Incorporated), or MBI.

To identify the students, MBI worked with nine higher education institutions, namely, the Selangor Technical Skills Development Centre, Universiti Selangor, Universiti Islam Selangor, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia, Universiti Tenaga Nasional and Universiti Multimedia.

# Time to make good on promises

By DANIAL DZULKIFLY

**W**ITH a year of political stability under its belt, the Madani Unity Government, led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, should now turn its focus towards addressing the pressing socioeconomic issues faced by Malaysians.

The administration has successfully navigated potential upheavals, dispelling threats from the opposition bloc Perikatan Nasional (PN) that hinted at a possible change in government.

These threats, which were speculated to transpire as early as August this year, did not materialise.

Anwar has repeatedly emphasised that all 18 parties within the Unity Government are committed to supporting the administration till the end of its term, prioritising the revitalisation of the nation's economy.

This was echoed by both Deputy Prime Minister I Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi as well as Deputy Prime Minister II Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof when all three men shared the same stage to answer questions from the public, in a historic first during the one-year Madani Government celebration in Bukit Jalil recently.

Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research (NASR) senior fellow Azmi Hassan said this sense of political stability is evident in the recent Federal Cabinet reshuffle, where merit-based consideration was made to ensure the adjustment fit the national agenda for reforms and placed more emphasis on facing new economic challenges.

For Azmi, this Cabinet reshuffle did not impose upon Anwar to choose a team based on who had given him political backing, compared to when the previous Cabinet was formed, where he needed to appease the 19 parties under the Unity Government then.

The reshuffle, made early in December and announced by Anwar, introduced five new ministers — Finance II Minister Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan, Plantation and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Johari Ghani, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo, and Human Resources Minister Steven Sim.

The reshuffle also split the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Communications and Digital, into two



separate ministries each.

This restructuring, which came after the Madani administration hit one year, increased the number of ministers in the Cabinet from 28 to 31 and the number of deputies from 27 to 29, bringing the total number of administrators in the Federal government to 60.

Weighing in on the matter is senior fellow at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs Oh Ei Sun, who opined that Anwar still faces a spectre of political instability prompted by several opposition parliamentarians throwing him their support, and an existing loophole in the Anti-Hopping Law.

"Political instability continues to plague this government, as its MPs could declare support for the other side without triggering anti-hopping laws.

"At the same time, it needs to take care of its reform agenda too, so as not to alienate its core supporters," he said.

But with the shadow of an internal political split receding, both analysts now think that the government's attention should firmly be on tackling fundamental issues, particularly those

affecting the livelihoods of ordinary citizens.

## Tangible benefits

One of the key areas of focus is the implementation of targeted financial assistance and other forms of aid to support vulnera-

ble groups.

Azmi said the government of the day must pay attention to the realities on the ground, taking more decisive action to tackle bread-and-butter issues the people face.

"The government should improve on providing aid directly, such as cash handouts to the most vulnerable group, and even expand the amount and the eligibility of certain income groups.

Moreover, the government should also concentrate on creating high-income job opportunities. This move is seen as crucial for elevating the economic status of the populace, enabling them to move up the socioeconomic ladder and improve their overall quality of life, said Azmi.

However, Azmi also cautioned

against an over-reliance on data-driven or economic indicators, such as gross domestic product (GDP) growth, as the sole measure of government success.

He pointed out that these metrics often don't reflect the actual financial struggles the people face.

Citing Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli's tendency to focus on statistics and data, Azmi referenced Anwar's perspective that quarterly GDP growth is irrelevant if it doesn't translate into tangible benefits for the people.

Oh also suggests that the government work towards easing businesses to conduct their activities in the country, including cutting red tape to allow more investment into the country to spur further economic growth.

Similar focus should also be given to infrastructure development, especially in Sabah and Sarawak, said Oh.

"Nationally, it has to improve the ease of doing business such as simplifying approval processes while beefing up on enforcement, and also to take care of food security. For East Malaysia, infrastructural improvements remain a major concern," he said.



# Celebrating faith and heritage

By YASMIN RAMLAN

**O**UR Lady of Lourdes Church in Klang was built almost a century ago, standing tall and proud in the middle of the city as a historical landmark in Selangor and one of the most photographed buildings in the royal town.

In conjunction with Christmas, *Selangor Journal* interviewed its parish priest, Reverend Father Gregory Chan, to find out more about the church that was built in 1928 by Reverend Father Jean Baptist Souhait from France.

According to Chan, Souhait had studied architecture in his early studies in France before joining the priesthood.

In 1923, Souhait was entrusted with overseeing the spiritual needs of Catholics in Klang and its neighbouring districts, including Kuala Selangor and Kuala Langat.

Recognising the need for a permanent church building, he took steps to secure the present site.

"Work to build Our Lady of Lourdes Church, which commenced in 1925, was only completed in August 1928.

"When designing the present church, he (Souhait) had his mind and heart set on having the church modelled along the lines of the famous Gothic-style church in Lourdes, France," said Chan.

Klang, once the capital of Selangor, is now a city with a diverse population and is rich for its historical and cultural heritage. Renowned for landmarks like the vibrant Little India district, Klang reflects a tapestry of ethnic influences.

The town area also served as a major port and trading hub for decades.

Chan shared that the land where the church now stands, on Jalan Tengku Kelana, was predominantly covered in jungle in 1923, with wild animals freely roaming the area.

"Before its construction, the area was bustling with Chinese and Indian traders. Interestingly, the area was once a jungle, inhabited by tigers and elephants.

"This was about 100 years ago, and the church was surrounded by several villages then.

"Now Our Lady of Lourdes has grown beyond being just a church; we have Sekolah Menengah Convent, a preschool, a college, and ample parking space here, too," he said.

## Upkeeping devotion

During the interview, Chan showed us around the church, including the original man-

made grotto, built in 1928, that has remained in its initial location.

"Throughout the years, the church has undergone various renovations and enhancements, specifically tailored to accommodate the increasing number of devoted parishioners who gather for prayer and devotions," he said.

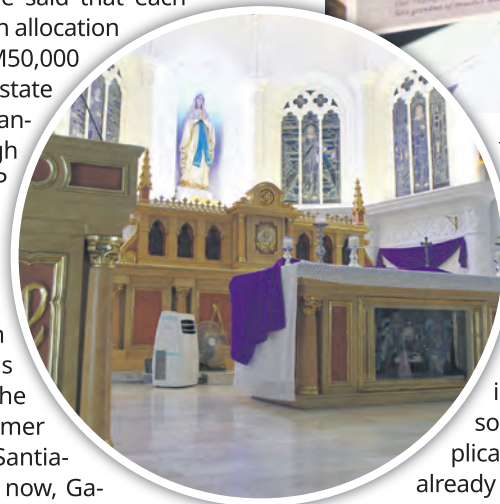
Every week, the church accommodates 400 parishioners in its services.

To sustain the 95-year-old church, he said it requires an annual expenditure of approximately RM200,000 for various maintenance aspects, including painting, roofing, parking facilities, and other necessities.

However, he said that each year there is an allocation of up to RM50,000 from the state that is channelled through the Klang MP to keep the church going.

"We received (the cash aid) even in previous years, since the time of former MP Charles Santiaago and up till now, Ganabatirau (Veraman)," he said.

Chan added that to ensure the safety of its parishioners, including senior citizens,



there is a need to install interlocking bricks due to uneven surfaces in the church compound.

Additionally, he said repair works are needed at the badminton court, which has been in a dilapidated state for some time, and that the application for some funds has already been submitted.

During the tabling of the 2024 Madani Budget in October, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced a RM50 million allocation for the reno-

vation and maintenance of registered non-Muslim places of worship. This would undoubtedly assist Our Lady of Lourdes Church in its upkeep.

## No taking chances

For the 2023 Christmas celebrations, Chan said it would be celebrated like past years, where a warm welcome is extended to all who come, and food is provided to those in need.

Elaborating further, he said canopies will be set up outside the church building to accommodate parishioners, ensuring a festive and comfortable environment for all.

Nevertheless, he urged everyone to exercise additional precautionary measures by wearing face masks, given the recent surge in the number of Covid-19 cases in the state.

"Even four weeks before Christmas, we had already started practising wearing face masks.

"On the day of the Christmas celebration, all caterers will also be required to wear face masks. We must remain vigilant.

"However, there will be no restrictions on the number of people allowed to attend the Christmas celebration here, unless we are instructed to do so," he said.

On Dec 18, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad announced that a total of 20,696 Covid-19 cases were reported from Dec 10 to 16.

While acknowledging concern, he said the government does not intend to reinstate restrictions such as imposing movement control orders.



# Sports Council welcomes distinguished faces to its board

By **DANIAL DZULKIFLY**

**SHAH ALAM** - The Selangor Sports Council (MSNS) is set to welcome new members to its board, including the former National Sports Council (NSC) director-general Datuk Ahmad Shapawi Ismail, said the state executive councillor for youth Najwan Halimi.

Shapawi, who retired from the NSC in September this year after an illustrious

four-decade career, will be joined by three other new appointees.

Seri Serdang state assemblyman Abbas Salimmi Adzmi has been named MSNS's Deputy Chairman II, adding to the notable changes in the council's lineup.

In a statement on Dec 12, Najwan said these appointments are part of a strategic move to reorganise and restructure MSNS, aiming to boost sports development across the state.

"MSNS has appointed new board members in line with its current restructuring and reorganisation plan, based on MSNS's vision and direction.

"The new board members are individuals with experience and direct involvement in the field of sports and youth development," he said.

Other new appointments include Selangor Youth Council president Datuk Mohd Imran Tamrin; Universiti Teknologi

Mara's (UiTM) Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation dean, Assoc Prof Raja Mohammed Firhad Raja Azidin; and Subang Jaya City councillor Pravin Murali.

Najwan added that State Secretary Datuk Setia Haris Kasim and State Financial Officer Datuk Ahmad Fadzli Ahmad Tajuddin will remain representatives of the state government in MSNS's management board for the 2023/2025 session.



## Selangor FC ends year on high note

**KUALA LUMPUR** - 2023 Super League season runner-up Selangor FC ended their final fixture on a winning note after scoring a convincing 3-1 victory over PDRM FC at the Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) Stadium on Dec 16.

In a Bernama report, the squad, under the tutelage of former national coach Tan Cheng Hoe, took a 2-0 lead with national striker Mohamad Faisal Abdul Halim finding the net in the 37th minute from the penalty spot and Brendan Gan extending the lead in the 44th minute.

PDRM FC managed to reduce the deficit in the 71st minute through Fadi Awad but substitute Richmond Boakye restored the two-goal advantage in the 88th minute to secure all three points.

Meanwhile, Sabah FC clinched a commendable third spot in the 2023 Super League competition after sweeping past Kedah Darul Aman FC (KDA) 2-0 at the Likas Stadium in Kota Kinabalu.

The three points earned on Dec 17 saw Sabah FC finish with 54 points behind champions Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) and Selangor, who claimed the top two spots, respectively while KDA FC finished fourth with 53 points.

Sabah under the able leadership of former national coach Datuk Ong Kim Swee scored their goals through Mo-

hammad Irfan Fazail and import Ramon Machado.

Malaysia Cup runner-up Terengganu FC also capped a win on their final day of the league season by beating Perak FC 3-0 at the Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium in Kuala Nerus.

Terengganu FC's top goal poacher Ivan Mamut started the ball rolling in the seventh minute before Engku Muhammad Nur Shakir Engku Yacob made it 2-0 in the 17th minute, while substitute Mohd Nor Hakim Hassan sealed the deal in the 81st minute.

In Seremban, visiting side Kuching City FC bounced back from a one goal deficit to score an emphatic 4-1 win over Negeri Sembilan at the Tuanku Abdul Rahman Stadium in Paroi.

Muhammad Shahrel Fikri Mohd Fauzi gave Negeri Sembilan FC a flying start, but the visitors fought back with goals from Bruno Dybal (44th min), Yuki Tanigawa (47th min), Pedro Henrique (55th min) and Dybal's second of the night in the 73rd minute to fly home with three points.

For the record, JDT, who clinched the 2023 Super League title with three matches to spare, registered an unprecedented record in Malaysian football by winning the Super League title for the 10th consecutive season. - Bernama

## Malaysia to be on global e-sports map

**KUALA LUMPUR** - Malaysia is set to become the centre of attention for global e-sports enthusiasts next year as it will host the Mobile Legends: Bang Bang (MLBB) M6 World Championship.

The announcement was made by Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports (KBS) Adam Adli Abd Halim when concluding his speech at the 2023 M5 World Championship Grand Finals in Manila, the Philippines, on Dec 17.

Adam said he was proud to announce that it would be one of the country's most important events, thus inviting all e-sports fans around the world to Malaysia.

"As we gather here to celebrate the M5 grand finals, I am thrilled to announce that Malaysia will be the proud host of the M6 Mobile Legends: Bang Bang World Championship in 2024. This marks the second time Malaysia will host the championship, following the successful hosting of the M1 in 2019.

"This achievement isn't just for a single person but for all Malaysians. We made it. M6 will be a momentous occasion for our nation, and we are eager to welcome players, fans, and e-sports enthusiasts from across the globe to experience the unmatched hospitality and passion that Malaysia has to offer," he said.

A total of 16 teams competed in the M5 World Championship in Manila from Dec 2 until Dec 17.

Malaysian representatives Team SMG and Homebois did not pass the group stage. - Bernama

# Going forward

The Selangor government has accomplished all five of its 100-day election pledges within just 76 days of taking office, marking a significant milestone for Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari's administration.



**Apart from the five pledges, other significant programmes that will be carried out through allocations from the 2024 Selangor Budget are:**

- connecting the state government control centre with each local council to enhance services and improve responsiveness
- reducing traffic congestion in Selangor with the help of other Federal agencies
- allocating RM100 million to enhance the quality of roads and other infrastructures in rural areas
- building 5,000 DC charging stations for electric vehicles in public areas
- transitioning towards a more efficient waste collection system by local councils through automation technology
- building a Premier Kita Selangor Park in each state constituency
- taking over the management of one low-cost apartment in each district to improve the quality of their amenities
- offering the option to convert parcel-rent and water utility rates from commercial rates to residential rates for first-time homeowners
- installing solar panels on every state government and local authority building
- offering RM1,500 in financial aid to undergraduate students
- offering internship opportunities with a RM1,500 monthly payment to 2,000 youths
- providing training for childminders and providing childcare facilities at government offices
- building Pulau Carey Port with cooperation from Putrajaya
- building railway connection from KLIA to Tanjong Sepat and Sungai Pelek