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The right momentum

After a record contribution to the national GDP in 2022 and recent projections for another year of growth, Selangor is ready to make good on its long-term goals of sustainability and development in 2024. As it navigates the middle ground between environmental protection and economic expansion, the welfare of the people remains its top priority. This firmness of purpose will set the pace for the year ahead and ensure a green state that is committed to unity, progress, and technological advancements.

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State to absorb water tariff hike for 1 million users

By SELANGOR JOURNAL TEAM

SHAH ALAM - The state government has agreed to absorb the increased cost of water usage for over one million consumers following the tariff adjustment announced by the National Water Services Commission (SPAN) on Jan 17.

Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari said this involves 285,673 account holders who are current participants of the Skim Air Darul Ehsan (SADE) free water programme.

As a result, the state government will subsidise an additional RM5.5 million a year to SADE beneficiaries, Amirudin said.

"Previously, households that were part of SADE saved an average of RM11.40 a month (in water bills). With the revised tariff, these savings will now increase to RM13.

"This means the cost that will be absorbed by the state government will also increase from RM31.8 million to approximately RM37.3 million a year," he said in a statement on Jan 18.

On the same note, Amirudin said the state has also agreed to absorb the increase in water tariff for places of worship and welfare institutions in Selangor, which will set the government back RM2 million.

"Overall, the cost to be incurred by the state government for the provision of the free water under SADE, as well as its decision to absorb the tariff increase for wor-

ship houses and welfare centres, is estimated at RM40 million each year."

He added that the allocation under the 2024 Selangor Budget is sufficient to cover these increased costs.

On Jan 17, SPAN announced that water tariffs for domestic users in the peninsula and the Federal Territory of Labuan would be adjusted effective Feb 1, involving an average increase of 22 cents per cubic metre.

It said the tariff hike could no longer be delayed so as not to affect the sustainability of the water service industry in the long term, thus impacting the quality of water supply services.

Sustainability assurance

Amirudin said the new water tariffs would ensure water sustainability and allow state water service provider Pengurusan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (Air Selangor) to better maintain their pipes.

It can now replace 300km of old pipes each year compared to 150km previously.

This, he said, will better prevent cases of burst pipes in the state.

"In addition, the construction of new water treatment plants will be further intensified to increase the water reserve margin to 20 per cent by 2030," he said.

Amirudin added that the increase in tariff will also result in improved water quality through the installation of more online analysers, in line with the Health Ministry's requirements.

New water tariffs in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya from Feb 1, 2024

Category	Total consumption	Rate (RM/m³)	Minimum charge (RM)
Domestic	0 m³ - 20 m³	0.65	6.50
	20 m³ - 35 m³	1.32	
	> 35 m³	2.63	
Non-domestic	0 m³ - 35 m³	2.70	36.00
	> 35 m³	2.94	
Places of worship	Fixed rate	0.66	6.60
Welfare institutions	Fixed rate	0.66	
Bulk domestic charge (Condominiums)	Fixed rate	1.68	173.00
Bulk domestic charge (Estates and government quarters)	Fixed rate	1.68	16.80
Bulk domestic charge (Low-cost homes)	Fixed rate	0.98	35.00
Ships	Fixed rate	7.08	70.80

Source: The Selangor Menteri Besar's press statement, *Water tariff review in Peninsula Malaysia* on Jan 18, 2024, and Pengurusan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd's website

"The state government, through Air Selangor, will also improve our service quality by being more responsive and efficient (in dealing with public complaints), including upgrading the current Air Selangor mobile application."

Meanwhile, the Menteri Besar urged households earning RM5,000 or less to register for SADE to enjoy up to 20 cubic metres of free water. Applications can be made at the Air Selangor website under 'Skim Air Darul Ehsan'.

Water security projects to complete by May

KLANG - Selangor's Raw Water Security Scheme (SJAM) is expected to be implemented in stages from February this year, with its full operations scheduled by May, said state executive councillor for infrastructure and agriculture Izham Hashim.

Phase 1 of the initiative is expected to be completed next month.

It includes the construction of a reservoir in Sungai Semenyih with an allocated budget of RM320 million and river diversions at the Rantau Panjang, Sungai Selangor Phase (SSP) 1, 2, 3, and Semenyih water treatment plants (WTP).

"However, the pumping station in Sungai Selangor is scheduled for completion in May, ensuring that SJAM achieves full operations by that month," he told the press after handing over aid to fishermen at Kampung Sungai Sireh in Port Klang, here, on Jan 9.

Meanwhile, on the Off-River Storage

Facility (ORS), which runs parallel to the SJAM initiative, Izham said the project aims to integrate lakes, ponds, and other water catchment areas into the state's river system, serving as an alternative raw water source.

"This approach ensures sufficient water reserves during droughts and utilises the water catchment areas during the rainy season to mitigate the risk of floods," he said.

On Jan 8, Izham conducted a major briefing on SJAM and flood mitigation efforts to 26 state assemblymen whose constituencies are affected by floods.

He explained the state's major flood mitigation projects to the elected representatives and assured better coordination between state and Federal agencies to manage flood risks.

SJAM includes several strategic measures to ensure water treatment plants re-

main operational if contamination occurs.

The measures include amendments to the Selangor Water Management Board (Luas) Enactment 1999, which the Selangor State Legislative Assembly passed in November 2020, and the surveillance of river basins by the Luas Rapid Squad (Skuad Pantas).

Meanwhile, Izham said Phase 1 of the Sungai Langat Flood Mitigation Plan (RTB) is in the process of acquiring land and is expected to be completed in 2027.

He said it is a long-term project under the High Priority Flood Mitigation (TBTT) initiative, involving a catchment area of 1,600 sq km.

"Among the scopes and components of this project include building a 1.46km-long flood barrier in Sungai Langat (Jalan Kajang Dengkil-Kolam Bukit Tampoi); a Bukit Tampoi pond inlet structure and a culvert structure connecting two Bukit

Tampoi ponds.

"It also includes the construction of an outlet structure and control gate connecting the Bukit Tampoi pond to Sungai Langat, as well as flood barriers and flood walls around the pond."

Izham said Phase 2 of the project is expected to begin this month and be fully completed in 2030.

Previously, Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad was reported to have said that the government has allocated RM725.7 million to implement the RTB project to solve disaster issues in the Dengkil area that stretches to Labohan Dagang in Sepang.

He said the project, a long-term plan under the TBTT, will be implemented in Sungai Langat Phase 1 and Phase 2 to protect about 120,000 people in the area from the impact of flooding.

By YASMIN RAMLAN AND DANIAL DZULKIFLY

SHAH ALAM - Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari is anticipating a healthy gross domestic product (GDP) growth of between 5 and 6 per cent this year.

He said if this target is achieved, the state would be able to contribute about 26 per cent to the national economy, an increase from the 25.5 per cent recorded in 2022.

The Statistics Department on Jan 19 said the national economic growth is expected to come in at 3.8 per cent in 2023. For 2024, Bank Negara Malaysia forecasted an economic growth of 4 to 5 per cent.

Selangor recorded 11.9 per cent of economic growth in 2022, surpassing Malaysia's 8.7 per cent.

"A growth of between 5 and 6 per cent will translate to a minimum additional contribution of between 0.4 and 0.5 of a percentage point (to the national GDP).

"Whatever it is, I have to analyse the data for 2023, which has not been released," he told reporters after his New Year mandate to state civil servants at the State Secretariat Building, here, on Jan 15.

Amirudin said the state also aims to attract RM50 billion in investments this year, surpassing last year's total of RM45 billion.

He expressed confidence that this can be achieved.

On a separate matter, Amirudin said he would be meeting with state public servants at all levels in stages after the coming state legislative assembly session, which will convene from Feb 27 to March 11, concludes.

The engagement aims to gather their feedback and opinions ahead of the First Selangor Plan's (RS-1) midterm review.

Asked to comment on his speech earlier about his call for civil servants to act promptly when carrying out their duties, Amirudin said he hopes the respective heads of departments will promote such practice.

He also emphasised the importance of addressing issues raised by the people in a swift and efficient manner, and not just during regular working hours.

"Getting support from the heads of department for more flexible working hours, beyond the regular office hours, can significantly help solve various issues, particularly those raised by the public.

"Some of them have started to practise it, and I hope it can be implemented and become a culture in the public sector," he said.

Meanwhile, Amirudin has again stressed the pivotal role of state civil servants in preserving the rich and diverse social fabric of Selangor, emblematic of Malaysia.

Being the nation's most affluent state that embraces all communities, Selangor and its public office

Selangor projects 6% GDP growth



bearers must approach their duties with a heightened awareness of the sensitivities of the respective communities.

He emphasised the need to uphold the principles of fairness and humanity in all their actions.

"We must safeguard the multireligious and multicultural tapestry of this state. In your day-to-day responsibilities, it is crucial to be mindful of the nuances of each community, refraining from actions that solely benefit one group or descendants.

"Today, we are called upon to respect and genuinely understand the diverse communities coexisting with us. We must execute our duties with an unwavering commitment to fairness and humanity," he said.

Amirudin also cautioned against the rise of extreme identity politics that could potentially ignite racial divi-

sion within the state and country.

"We must handle this situation well because we are not a state dominated by a single group. We have people of diverse communities, lineages, and backgrounds.

"If practising identity politics becomes the norm, it can inflate the ego of that identity, leading to conflicts or the emergence of unnecessary crises or uncertainties."

Amirudin added that despite the state's open-door policy for individuals seeking better opportunities, Selangor remains committed to the rule of law and good governance.

"While we welcome everyone, they must all abide by local, immigration, and Federal laws. I will support any enforcement action taken with a collaborative spirit," he said.

More investments coming in, says exco

SUBANG JAYA - Selangor's economy is expected to continue to surge this year, with its investment target increasing to RM50 billion, said state executive councillor for investment Ng Sze Han.

Last year, the state government aimed for RM45 billion in investments, which is expected to increase further due to several factors, including Selangor's strategic position.

"Recently, we received numerous enquiries from foreign countries, particularly China, including battery fac-

tory Tenpower, which is interested in investing in Selangor as we have Port Klang and two airports (the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang Jaya and the Kuala Lumpur International Airport).

"This is an advantage for Selangor, aside from having several industrial sites developed as the main attraction. Investors can choose the site suitable for them," he said.



Speaking at a tree-planting event in BK 3/1 Bandar Kinrara, here, on Jan 13, Ng said the sectors helping

to boost investments in Selangor include manufacturing, warehousing, and logistics.

"One of the attractions is logistics as Selangor is located in the middle of the peninsula and South-east Asia, making its location highly suited for investment.

"Several mega projects will enter

and establish themselves in Selangor ... we will announce them later," he said.

Last year, Ng announced that Tenpower, China's largest lithium-ion battery manufacturing plant, has agreed to develop a 48-acre factory in Kuala Langat with a RM1.3 billion investment value.

During a joint visit to the country with Invest Selangor Berhad, he said Tenpower's investment will also create 700 job opportunities, including for engineers.



Waste company wants more people to use its app

SHAH ALAM - KDEB Waste Management Sdn Bhd (KDEBWM) aims to garner 250,000 registered users on its i-Clean Selangor waste disposal complaint app this year, said its managing director Dato' Ramli Mohd Tahir.

The app, launched in 2016, has 150,000 registered users at present.

"Close to 98 per cent of the complaints received via the app were successfully resolved within the specified period, like waste collection within 12 hours and public cleaning within 48 hours.

"As such, for this year, we aim to get 100,000 more users for i-Clean Selangor. It facilitates users in submitting complaints, especially those concerning waste collection," he told *SelangorKini*.

Ramli added that KDEBWM will collaborate with the local authorities, state assemblymen, and members of parliament to facilitate user registration.

Meanwhile, KDEBWM is focusing on improving its performance by expanding business prospects this year.

"This year, we have obtained approval to manage industrial waste in the Selayang Municipal Council compared to only in the Kuala Langat Municipal Council and the Kuala Selangor Municipal Council previously.

"Similarly, the Selayang Municipal Council and the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council have extended their domestic waste collection contracts with us for another seven years," he said.

Last year, i-Clean Selangor won the Best Public Service Application award at the 23rd PC.com Awards ceremony.

The app makes it easy for the public to make complaints on solid waste collection, receive related services online, and apply for bulk waste disposal services.

Download the app on Google Play and the App Store, or contact customer service at 1-800-88-2824/019-375 9592 or WhatsApp 019-2742824 for faster complaint handling.

State in sprint for more tourists

By NORRASYIDAH ARSHAD

SABAK BERNAM - Selangor is targeting over 5.6 million in domestic and international tourist arrivals throughout 2024, far surpassing last year's figure.

State executive councillor for tourism Dato' Ng Suee Lim said the projected figure is almost a million more than the 4.8 million tourists the country's most developed state welcomed in 2023.

He said this is possible through the various campaigns to promote the state, adding that this year is the 'final sprint' before the Visit Selangor Year 2025.

"We expect the previous and ongoing promotional efforts via various platforms to positively impact tourist arrivals this year," he told *SelangorKini*.

Ng said this while hosting a three-day, two-night tour to northern Selangor for Thailand's tourism agents in a bid to promote the region to potential tourists from the land of

white elephants.

The 40 agents from Hatyai, Songkhla and Betong will be brought to visit several attractions located in the northern corridor, specifically from Kuala Selangor to Sabak Bernam.

Among the tourist spots are Bukit Malawati, Pantai Redang, Sky Mirror, and the Firefly Conservation Centre.

Meanwhile, Ng said agrotourism destinations like the dragon fruit farms in Sepang and recreational spots in Kuala Kubu Bharu are expected to attract more tourists to the state this year.

"We also expect the northern region of Selangor to continue drawing tourists in," he said, citing the Avani Sepang Goldcoast Resort and other tourism spots in Morib as examples of key destinations.

Last September, Tourism Selangor chief executive officer Azrul Shah Mohamad said the state is expecting international tourist arrivals to reach pre-pandemic levels this year following the lifting of global travel restrictions.



Unity programme to go on tour

SHAH ALAM - The Gagasan Rumpun Selangor grassroots initiative will go on a statewide tour in February to foster unity and celebrate the state's diverse cultural heritage.

State executive councillor for unity Datuk Rizam Ismail said the programme, which will be held for three days and two nights in each location, will kick off in Hulu Selangor in February, with the final leg in November.

"Among the activities lined up are community sports, cultural performances, and visits to craft centres," he told *SelangorKini*.

"We are fortunate as the Menteri Besar (Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari) and Raja Muda of Selangor (Tengku Amir Shah) will also grace each of these programmes."

Previously, when tabling the 2024 Selangor Budget on Nov 10, 2023, Amirudin had an-

nounced a RM4.5 million allocation for the Gagasan Rumpun Selangor initiative.

He said a host of activities are being planned across all nine districts in Selangor to promote unity and highlight the various people-centric state and Federal government initiatives.

On a separate matter, Rizam said he plans to empower village community leaders further via a restructuring process.

He said it is high time that villages in the state be empowered to allow them to highlight their respective local economies better and attract more tourists ahead of the Visit Selangor Year 2025.

"I plan to increase the roles of village heads and conduct a restructuring of every village leadership. We will also hold more unity programmes in the coming months."

By DANIAL DZULKIFLY

SHAH ALAM - Selangor and, by extension, Malaysia, stand out as compelling choices for high-quality investments due to the prevailing political stability amid a backdrop of global uncertainties, according to Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari.

He said the state and country are uniquely positioned to drive economic growth and generate impactful employment opportunities, drawing a contrast to the current global reality where an unprecedented 4.2 billion people are expected to participate in elections across 76 countries this year.

This makes 2024 the largest election year in history, he noted.

"Just last week, Taiwan, a hotbed of microchips and semiconductors, elected its new government. Two days ago, the United States initiated its unofficial process, with most pollsters favouring former president Donald Trump as the Republican nominee.

"Similarly, Indonesia is poised to elect

Year of uncertainties favours Selangor: MB

its new president next month, while elections are also scheduled in India, Russia, and the European Union later this year.

"Amidst this global uncertainty, I believe Selangor and Malaysia are in a privileged position to focus on working and delivering (results)," he said in his keynote address at the Selangor Digital School's (SDS) AI Nusantara programme graduation ceremony at DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, here, on Jan 18.

Amirudin said this involves harnessing the vast potential of emerging industries, with the aim to turbocharge the state and national economy to reach the top 30 in the world, in line with the Federal government's target as outlined in the

New Industrial Master Plan 2030.

In his speech, the Menteri Besar also stressed the Selangor government's commitment to building a robust technological infrastructure in the state, especially in digitalisation and AI solutions, to support an advanced and highly-skilled workforce.

"When I presented the First Selangor Plan in August 2022, we emphasised technology and digital economy as key pillars to elevate Selangor's position as the gateway to Asean.

"Since then, the management at SDS has actively worked to identify strategic partners to develop contemporary modules to provide young people in Selangor

with improved knowledge and practical experience, preparing them for better and higher-paying jobs," he said.

The AI Nusantara programme, a comprehensive one-month training and placement initiative, is done under the auspices of SDS and in collaboration with The Hive Southeast Asia.

It is designed to address the shortage of workforce in the field of AI, particularly in digital marketing and prompt engineering.

The first cohort of the programme saw the successful upskilling of 31 students from Universiti Selangor's Bestari Jaya campus, with SDS aiming to nurture 600 talents this year.

STDC proposes industrial training for its students

HULU LANGAT - The Selangor Technical Development Centre (STDC) is pushing for greater collaboration with more industry players to offer short-term skills courses for students.

Its chief executive officer Mohd Ramali Abu Bakar said this is among the state subsidiary's points of focus this year to ensure trainees are given quality skills training, subsequently increasing their employability.

"Since last year, we have been actively conducting short-term courses called 'place and train' in collaboration with industries, ensuring job placements after the students complete the courses.

"Considering the positive response from many industries, we will enhance the programme and increase student intake this year," he said after inspecting the installation of electrical wiring and lights contributed by Menteri Besar Selangor (Incorporated), or MBI, at the Seri Rinchang Apartment, Semenyih, here, on Jan 10.

Commenting further, Ramali said 500 trainees will be chosen to participate in STDC's skills programmes via four intakes

this year.

"Among the courses we are offering are automotive, motorcycle, electrical, computer system and air-conditioning technology, as well as pastry and culinary, with hostel facilities also to be provided," he said.

STDC is a state government technical education institution that offers various high-impact, quality skills training in line with the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

At the same programme, MBI social responsibility and corporate communication head Ahmad Azri Zainal Nor announced an allocation of RM13,000 for the replacement of electrical wiring and ceiling lights at the Seri Rinchang Apartment.

The installation is done in collaboration with STDC, which offers human resources.

"Through this cooperation, we were able to save about RM5,000 compared to the quotation given by contractors," he said.

Azri said a similar approach would be adopted for other projects in other locations, considering its success in lowering costs while simultaneously offering training to STDC students.

Sustainable solutions for better crop yields

KLANG - The state government is directing its efforts towards seed breeding, a crucial method of developing superior crops and plants, as part of Selangor's broader strategy to bolster food security.

State executive councillor for agriculture Izham Hashim said the administration also aims to support farmers in cultivating higher-quality poultry and livestock, particularly chickens and cattle.

"We are actively working towards increasing our yield, especially in paddy cultivation and other livestock sectors, to enhance food security in the state.

"This includes establishing a food stockpile warehouse with a RM40 million budget, to be constructed on a five-hectare parcel of land," he said during a press conference in Kampung Sungai Sireh, here on Jan 9.

Izham was attending a programme held in collaboration with the Malaysian Fisheries Development Authority to distribute RM275,000 in aid to 40 fishermen from five regions, namely Sepang, Kuala Selangor, Kuala Langat, Port Klang, and Sungai Besar.

Noting Selangor's significant contribution to the supply of fish nationwide, the councillor said the state government plans to provide better aid to local fishermen, including boating supplies, to support improved sea catches.

Separately, the state's Jualan Ehsan Rahmah, which offers basic goods at discounted prices, will be coordinated so it can be held alongside the Federal government's Jualan Agro Madani to enhance both initiatives and for them to reach their intended target.

In the 2024 Selangor Budget, Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari announced a RM50 million allocation to improve food security in the state.

Of this, RM40 million will be apportioned to a collaborative initiative with the Selangor Agricultural Corporation (PKPS) to ensure a better food stockpile.

Another RM10 million will be dedicated to crop clustering projects and the development of downstream products within the state.

He said this initiative seeks to boost local agriculture, support farmers, and generate additional long-term income.





The dean of Universiti Selangor's Faculty of Communication, Visual Arts and Computing, Assoc. Prof. TS Dr Wan Azlan Wan Hassan (front row, centre), and students of the Selangor Digital School give the thumbs up after their graduation ceremony at DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Shah Alam, on Jan 18

The AI future is now

By **DANIAL DZULKIFLY**

THE digital revolution has reached unprecedented heights with the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), giving rise to the development of numerous tools to harness this innovative technology for solving complex problems.

Selangor, the nation's wealthiest state that contributes significantly to one-third of the national economy, has emerged as a pioneer state government in incorporating AI into its digital systems that service the public.

This initiative aims to also support advanced economic sectors, aiming to create high-impact jobs within the state.

Instead of limiting its vision to paper, the state government has committed substantial resources to this cause.

Through the detailed First Selangor Plan (RS-1) launched in 2022, the government has prioritised technology and the digital economy, designating them as key pillars in elevating Selangor's position as the business gateway to Asean.

Among other major initiatives is the proposed establishment of a Selangor Centre for AI, which is seen as a strategic move to establish a robust AI infrastructure and capitalise on emerging opportunities in the technology sector.

As announced during the 2024 Selangor Budget, the state government has allocated RM1 million to establish this centre.

Meeting industry needs

Selangor Information Technology and Digital Economy Corporation (Sidec) chief executive officer Yong Kai Ping (*pic*) said this initiative aligns with the Selangor Digital School's (SDS) objective of cultivating AI talent.

SDS, an educational initiative by Sidec, aims to train 600 students in AI and integrate them into the industry through placements in tech companies.

The programme dubbed the AI Nusantara, has already produced its first batch of graduates, 30 students from Universiti Selangor's computer science programme studying AI engineering.

Yong said its primary objective is to rectify the mismatch between available talents and the evolving needs of industries, mainly as Selangor aims to attract high-quality investments.

"At present, there exists a disparity between the available talent pool and the requirements of tech companies. Despite the influx of foreign direct investment, the challenge lies in the insufficient talent pool.

"To attract high-tech industries, we need to showcase a substantial talent pool, where proficiency in English is now considered a basic requirement, and possessing AI skills is a crucial qualification," he said in a recent interview with *Selangor Journal*.

Yong further said that the AI Nusantara programme, comprising a 60-hour syllabus, is designed to augment the value of students' tertiary education. Importantly, it can be tailored to align with the industry's specific requirements, offering flexibility and relevance.

In addition to its collaboration with private firms, a significant attraction of the programme lies in its ability to supply much-needed talent to the Selangor Centre for AI.

Through the Centre for AI, developed in collaboration with the Selangor Technical Development Centre (STDC) and other government agencies, the state aims to provide long-term benefits to the private sector by fostering a knowledgeable and capable workforce ready to take on the jobs opened by investments.

AI for everything

Yong emphasised that while private AI labs are prevalent, many need more



To attract high-tech industries, we need to showcase a substantial talent pool, where proficiency in English is now considered a basic requirement, and possessing AI skills is a crucial qualification

YONG KAI PING

Chief executive officer,
Selangor Information
Technology and Digital
Economy Corporation

challenging projects, a situation contrasting with Selangor.

"The state grapples with complex challenges daily. Through establishing the centre, talents from our programme can contribute to resolving these issues.

"Take, for instance, the formation of the Selangor Mobility Lab. The centre aims to address road congestion while simultaneously enhancing the efficiency of public transportation and encouraging its use," he said.

Yong provided additional details, emphasising that the programme goes beyond imparting essential AI skills; it also facilitates placements or internships with tech companies seeking individuals with these valuable skills.

"We not only offer them internships but also, hopefully, opportunities with tech companies. Every participant receives actual internship offers, although some may opt to decline, allowing them the freedom to choose their path."

Yong underscored the practical application of acquired knowledge within these tech companies. It goes beyond simply mastering AI tools like ChatGPT; participants learn to understand specific business needs.

"They need to comprehend the concerns and then identify AI tools suitable for their respective industries, such as accounting, business processes, manufacturing, or the utilisation of robotic arms in retail. The application of AI extends to diverse areas, including integrating them into coffee machines, for instance," he added.

In the long term, Yong explained that he wishes to see the programme properly turned into an institute with proper accreditation from the Malaysian Qualifications Agency.

"We still have a long way to go before this happens, but for now, we are providing physical classes to 30 students per batch at a time to ensure quality learning and implementation.

"We aim to train 600 of these students for the year. Our talent is not merely



from this state but all over Malaysia," he said.

Into the future

During the inaugural graduation ceremony of the AI Nusantara programme on Jan 18, Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari reiterated the state's unwavering commitment to building a robust AI ecosystem within its borders.

Amirudin stressed the importance of Malaysia's most developed state leading the AI competition to position the country as a regional leader in Southeast Asia.

"It is no mean feat, but I don't see why we should not aim higher," he said.

He highlighted that with the introduction of the five-year RS-1, the state government has identified technology and the digital economy as key pillars in elevating Selangor as the gateway to Asean.

Efforts such as the AI Nusantara programme are viewed as instrumental in achieving this goal.

Amirudin emphasised the significance of tailored training provided by the programme, enabling students from diverse backgrounds to better understand and benefit from AI advancements.

"AI Nusantara will also address inequality in access to AI education and narrow the gap between the haves and have-nots," he said.

Amirudin expressed confidence that the AI Nusantara programme is a positive step towards deeper integration of AI in the daily operations of the private sector, marking a significant move in the right direction.

Similarly, state executive councillor for investment, trade and mobility Ng Sze Han highlighted the significance of initiatives with a strong focus on

cultivating skills relevant to Smart Cities and Smart Mobility, particularly in industries such as electric vehicles (EV) and batteries.

"This strategic emphasis positions Malaysia as an enticing destination for foreign investors seeking to capitalise on advancements in these sectors. Undoubtedly, the existence of a skilled workforce emerges as a pivotal factor in the allure of Foreign Direct Investment," Ng asserted.

Ng said SDS has established fruitful collaborations with 55 companies associated with the Internet Alliance and 50 companies within the Sidec co-operation network.

A total of 105 industry collaboration partners have expressed interest in welcoming students who have undergone training in AI.

Ng also highlighted the reputable companies involved in industrial collaborations, including Yinson Holdings Bhd, Lazada, Fusionex Group, EasyStore, Razer Merchant Services, and ClickAsia.

The emphasis on partnerships with key industry players demonstrates a commitment to aligning skills development with industry needs, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for the demands of the evolving job market.



By **DANIAL DZULKIFLY**

SELANGOR is positioned to lay the foundation for fiscal decentralisation from the Federal government, owing to its skilful ability to manage its own finances in recent years.

Backed by its successful debt settlement with the Federal administration and a governance policy aligned with the ambitious First Selangor Plan (RS-1), the state is now strategically focused on diversifying revenue streams beyond land-related transactions and business licences.

The imperative for a diversified revenue stream becomes evident as Selangor pursues multifaceted policies under the five-year blueprint, aiming to stimulate new economic sectors, generate high-paying jobs, and enhance upward social mobility through various social intervention programmes.

Notable initiatives include the creation of special economic zones like the Sabak Bernam Development Area (Sabda), the Integrated Development Region in Southern Selangor (Idriss), and the Selangor Maritime Gateway (SMG), a major economic zone designated along Sungai Klang.

Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari has also unveiled plans for the formation of the Greater Klang Valley administrative region, uniting the cities of Petaling Jaya, Subang Jaya, Shah Alam, and Klang, which is expected to officially become a city in February.

The aim of the initiative is to create coordination among these cities in unifying their bylaws, increasing the efficiency and efficacy of public service delivery, and consolidating resources.

A visionary undertaking currently under consideration is the Kita Selangor Rail Line project, which proposes connecting railway services from Klang to Kuala Selangor, Tanjong Karang, and Sabak Bernam. The proposed alignment also links the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) railway to Tanjong Sepat and Sungai Pelek, transforming the west coast of Selangor into a railway services corridor.

Amirudin also announced plans to establish a Local Authorities Service Commission, with a bill anticipated in the third quarter of next year, which aims to enhance local authorities' responsiveness and efficiency, specifically in addressing public complaints, and to reduce response time to 24 hours.

Chief economist at Bank Muamalat Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid (*pic*) emphasised the need for flexibility in Selangor's fiscal management. In an interview with *Selangor Journal*, he advocated discussions between Selangor and the Federal government to explore tax revenues and diversification measures.

"The state is predominantly dependent on land-related sales or, by extension, the property sector. To diversify income, discussions on decentralisation in economic activities and various tax collections need to be undertaken," he explained.

Drawing parallels with Sabah and Sarawak, Afzanizam highlighted that discussions were held within their state governments



about expanding revenue from the Federal government, including a share of oil and natural gas collected from within their territories.

Examining Selangor's fiscal governance and record, Afzanizam noted the state's projected debt repayment of RM19 million to the Federal Government this year and its impressive revenue collection of RM2.571 billion, surpassing the RM2 billion target.

"Fulfilling its debt obligations showcases

responsible financial management. Selangor has the credibility to manage its fiscal affairs independently. Granting them (all states) more autonomy is the most suitable approach, and it should be on a case-by-case basis, with other states demonstrating their ability to handle autonomy effectively," he said.

"I think it cannot be a one-size-fits-all solution ... and other states need to demonstrate to the Federal government that they can handle it as well."

Selangor's financial freedom roadmap



With Selangor successfully settling its debts to the Federal government, the state has expanded its fiscal capacity, paving the way for an expansion of productive initiatives

MOHD AFZANIZAM ABDUL RASHID
Chief economist,
Bank Muamalat



Forward-thinking moves

In a strategic move to reduce the reliance on private vehicles, Selangor is embarking on a comprehensive expansion of its public transportation system, which would significantly help the public and save on costs.

"Public transportation is usually synonymous with urban areas. Now, it is being expanded to Kuala Selangor, Tanjong Karang, and Sabak Bernam, where residents typically use cars to travel to the city. This would ease their transportation mode.

"A large project like this will undoubtedly bring economic benefits. It would also create a new population, housing projects, shops, and various facilities that will be improved," he said on the Kita Selangor Rail project.

Afzanizam stated that the current RM3 million budget is insufficient as it is designated for research, and a more substantial budget would be required to implement the project.

He also lauded the state

administration's move to address the escalating solid waste crisis by spearheading a groundbreaking initiative to develop the Sultan Idris Shah Green Energy (SISGE) Plant (Phase 4).

Citing data from the Housing and Local Government Ministry, he said the estimated daily solid waste in Selangor reached a staggering 7,670 metric tons in 2021, amounting to an annual total of 2.8 million metric tons.

"Considering Selangor has the largest population in Malaysia, it also has the highest amount of solid waste. Therefore, the effort to develop a green energy plant is a necessity as landfill space is decreasing.

"Moreover, it can convert waste into energy, making it a wise solution because it not only addresses the issue of landfill sites but also generates beneficial green energy for all, aligning with the National Energy Transition Roadmap 2050 (NETR) launched last August," he said.

Focus on social mobility

With Selangor successfully settling its debts to the Federal government, the state has expanded its fiscal capacity, paving the way for an expansion of productive initiatives, said Afzanizam.

This increased financial stability not only signifies Selangor's responsible fiscal management but also presents an opportunity for the state to delve into strategic investments that can bolster its social welfare programmes.

"I believe that if the state government were to issue its state bonds, it could attain a AAA rating, given its ability to clear its debts," said Afzanizam, pointing towards the potential for Selangor to secure a robust credit rating, which will testify to its financial good health.

However, Afzanizam raised a cautionary note against the state falling into a moral hazard by continuously providing cash aids or direct assistance without incorporating an element of upward social mobility.

"If we grow overly dependent on assistance, it could lead to potential declines in productivity and foster a lackadaisical attitude towards work or business. It's imperative for us to carefully consider the fairness of our approach.

"Any form of aid should be outcome-based and possess a clear direction. Assistance is crucial, but it must contribute to tangible results."

Afzanizam added that cash payments, for example, should be steadily reduced over the next five years.

He clarified that this reduction isn't a cut in commitment but a strategic move to reallocate resources to numerous programmes concurrently aiding people in improving their standard of living.

"The economic focus is on upward social mobility, with a vision for individuals engaged in business to thrive in a progressive environment over the next five years, gradually becoming self-reliant and less dependent on government assistance, for example.

"Consequently, the budget allocation for cash payments diminishes each year, reflecting the success of complementary policies that prioritise developmental initiatives. It is these policies that should be at the forefront of Selangor's emphasis," he said.



Bring on the luck

By YASMIN RAMLAN

ORNAMENTAL lime trees decorate the entrance of many Chinese homes every spring festival, greeting guests with their plump globes of emerald green.

Cherished for what they are called in Cantonese, 'kat' (吉), which sounds like 'luck', they are said to bring auspiciousness and prosperity to the new year.

However, the tradition of displaying lime trees at home for the Chinese New Year is slowly becoming less popular, with many younger families having less regard for their significance.

May Lum, 44, (pic, left) the wife of the owner of Ng Chong Wee Lime Tree Trading and a prominent supplier of lime trees in Sungai Buloh, noted that the generational shift away from participating in such age-old beliefs has caused her business to be slightly impacted.

Like her customers who have dwindled, Lum's lime trees in her three-hectare farm, too, are a lot fewer now than in years past.

"We used to grow a lot of lime trees, but now we're cutting down on production since today's youth don't understand the cultural significance of the

trees for Chinese New Year.

"Our current customer base consists primarily of restaurants, retail centres, and hotels," she said during an interview with *Selangor Journal*.

Tradition at a price

Apart from the doing-away of tradition, the skyrocketing price of lime trees is also a significant factor for the decline in their popularity, said Lum.

She explained that the market price of a single lime tree can be any amount from RM88 to nearly RM3,000, depending on its height.

"Even if the tree is only three feet tall, it must be laden with fruits," she said.

Neighbouring Lum's farm about four kilometres away, flower market owner Lim Fuang Yong, 36, (pic, right) admitted that he had to cut back on his orders for the festive season by 30 per cent due to the current economic climate.

He said things got tough following the enforcement of the movement control order during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 when most people stayed home and shopped online.

"We did not have an online platform back then. However, this year, we are planning to expand our sales on the Internet. But we will only offer selected

items such as indoor plants.

"This is because outdoor plants sold online have a higher risk of dying during shipment, and we are unable to reimburse the cost of returns or absorb losses. In addition, on-line sales will cost us more on logistics," he said.

When asked if he intends to increase his prices in light of the economic situation, Lim said that he would not, as a way of saying thank you to his regular customers for their support.

However, Lim said while other varieties of plants such as the chrysanthemum and the pussy willow have become increasingly popular he would still typically sell 300 to 500 lime trees of various sizes each year.

Climate's grip

Although the Chinese New Year is celebrated with much joy despite any weather, climate change has left a significant impact on the cultivation of lime trees.

Lum said she is grappling with the challenge of preserving the essential qualities of the plant as changing climate factors alter the process of nurturing ornamental trees.

"The weather can be at extreme ends. One day, there can be a heavy

downpour, while the next is bright and sunny. Such conditions are not conducive to producing high-quality lime trees.

"To accommodate this, we utilise high-quality fertiliser to cultivate trees that bear more fruit," she explained.

Lum, who has over a decade of experience in the business, said that she and her husband once managed the cultivation of 7,000 lime trees in one go. But that

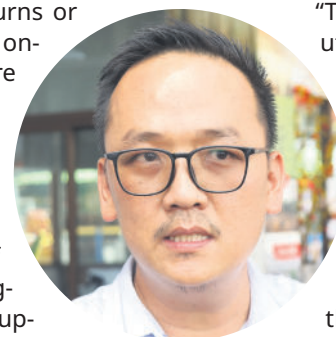
was many years back and in sharp contrast to what they have at their farm now, which is a mere 1,000 trees.

The couple had gained invaluable knowledge of the lime tree business from her husband's uncle, whose farm of 40 years they took over in 2015.

Lum noted that some customers prefer China-imported lime trees due to their vibrant fruit colour, distinct from the green ones grown at her farm.

However, she stated that those with expertise, especially from the older generation, value high-quality lime trees for their green fruits as the fruits would then turn a vibrant orange and stay on their vines for weeks.

Due to climate change, however, some plants are not blossoming on time and may not make it for the festive season.



Torchbearer of an ancient art

By DANIAL DZULKIFLY

CALLIGRAPHY stands as a monumental pillar of Chinese culture and heritage, and as an art form, continues to be highly revered and sought after by members of the community, even in today's fast-paced world of computers and automation.

At the age of 12, Yew Bon Tew was already embarking on a journey with ink, brush and paper that would shape the rest of his life. Now, at 84, he remains dedicated to perfecting the intricate art of the Chinese script.

This lifelong commitment is an attestation to how much the Chinese hold calligraphy in esteem. It reflects a whole people's fierce determination to preserve and nurture the 3,000-year-old art form.

The strokes of his brush carry not just ink but also the weight of history and reflect a unique fusion of artistic expression and linguistic precision.

Residing in his humble family home in Jenjarom, Kuala Langat, Yew is a cornerstone of Tiong Hua culture in the community.

He generously shares his art by providing prints and posters for free to the public, especially those who seek his skills for family or community events.

"Chinese calligraphy transcends being merely an art form. In the past,

these writings were employed to advertise businesses or promote events and even weddings.

"So each time anyone here asks me for posters or prints of my work, I gladly say yes. This appreciation for the art form ensures that Chinese calligraphy remains an integral part of the community and in the preservation of our heritage," he said when met at his home.

Heralding spring

Each year, as the Chinese New Year approaches, Yew would write *chun lian* or spring festival couplets to give away for free.

Traditionally, the poetic lines of *chun lian* are scripted on red paper and pasted at the front door of people's homes to welcome spring and as blessings for a better year.

Yew is known to have given out 1000 pieces of *chun lian* in the last two decades.

Beyond celebrations and festivities, Yew is keen to draw attention to the practical applications of Chinese calligraphy in the broader context of communication and representation.

Its historical use in advertising echoes through time, demonstrating its enduring relevance in conveying not just words, but the values associated with them.

Yew emphasises that the art form is

also a means of self-expression and cultivation. How one writes, he asserts, is as important as what one writes.

Calligraphy has retained its significance in the Chinese community as the written script is held in high esteem due to the distinguished nature of writing and literacy in traditional China.

Even the materials used in calligraphy, such as ink and paper, are subjects of Yew's particular attention, with the artist sourcing the finest directly from China.

This dedication to authenticity ensures that each stroke preserves the essence of the tradition, connecting the present to the rich history of the Chinese people.

A new generation

In the twilight of his life, Yew remains committed to spending innumerable hours at his work table to produce prints by the thousands.

However, he candidly acknowledges his physical limitations, recognising that age has caught up with him and that he is unable to dedicate the same amount of time to the art as he did in the past.

Contemplating the future of Chinese calligraphy, Yew expressed hope and called on the younger generation to be its new torchbearers.

The preservation of this revered art form, he said, lies in the hands of young

people.

Yew emphasised that the ideal platform for safeguarding Chinese calligraphy is through vernacular Chinese education.

"My passion (for calligraphy) began to blossom when I was in Standard Six, where I received praise from my teachers for my skills with the brush. It was at that point that I started to develop an appreciation for it and gradually understood its profound importance.

"I firmly believe that the same should be practised by the youth of today. We must provide them with proper education on the art form, ensuring its continued appreciation for generations to come," he said with passion.

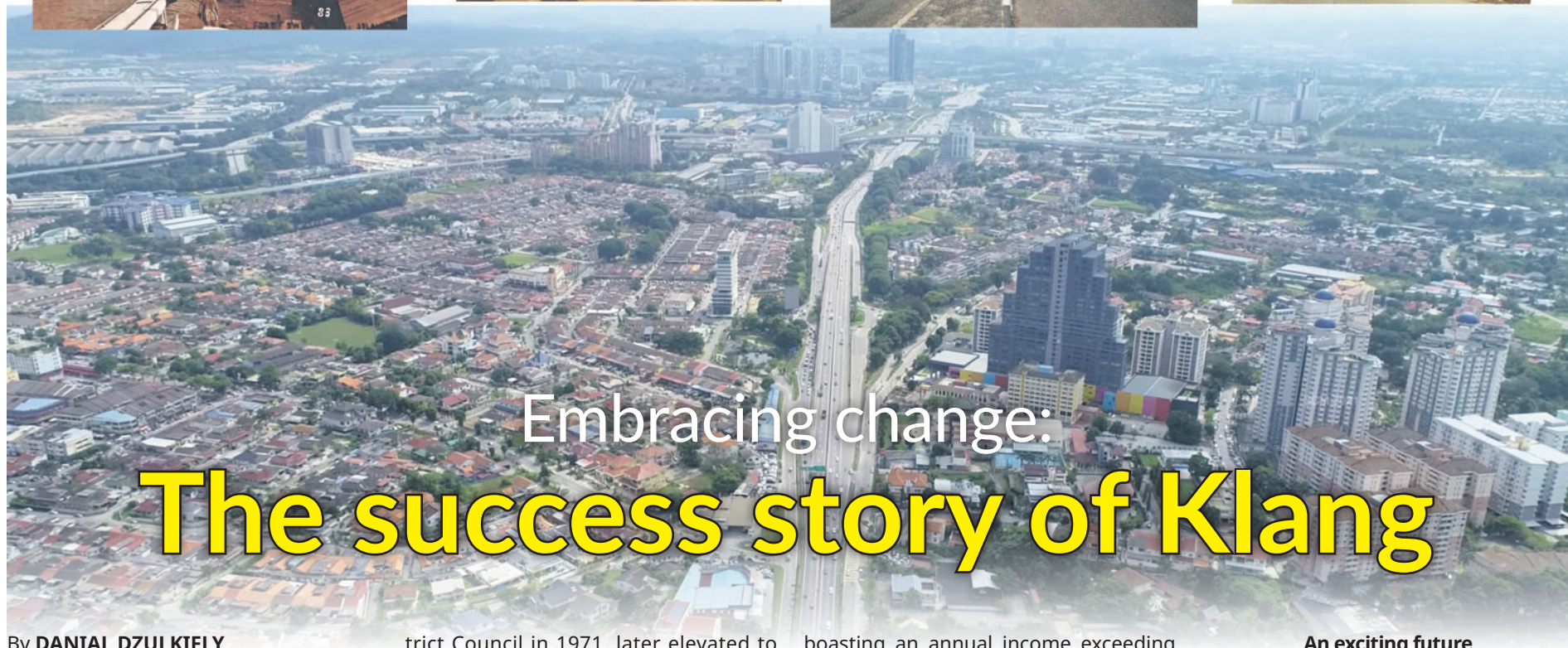
Having been the president of SJK(C) Jenjarom for over two decades, Yew has organised and promoted many calligraphy writing competitions at the school.

By actively engaging with students, he strives to cultivate an environment where the beauty and significance of Chinese calligraphy are not just understood but also cherished.

In his view, education is the answer to the longevity of Chinese calligraphy.

By imparting knowledge to the younger generation and fostering a genuine passion for the art form among them, he hopes to create a legacy that transcends his own limitations, ensuring that Chinese calligraphy remains alive and vibrant for years to come.





Picture source: Google Images

Embracing change:

The success story of Klang

By DANIAL DZULKIFLY

THE evolution of Klang from a colonial port town to an emerging city is a saga of resilience, adaptation, and progress.

Rooted in the 19th century, Klang has evolved into a vibrant urban centre, seamlessly blending its historical legacy with modern development.

To comprehend the significance of Klang, particularly as the seat of the Selangor Royal House, one must trace its modest origins as a coastal town in the west of Peninsular Malaysia.

Its transformation commenced in the 19th century, fueled by the surge in tin mining that laid the foundation for its growth despite the challenges of the Klang War (Selangor Civil War).

Surmounting these challenges, Klang became the British colonial administration's capital for Selangor from 1875 to 1880, showcasing its importance in governance and commerce.

In 1901, the establishment of Port Swettenham (now Port Klang), named after Sir Frank Swettenham, the first resident-general of the Federated Malay States, reshaped Klang's economic landscape, positioning it as a maritime hub.

The shift from coffee to rubber production, especially in the states of Perak and Selangor, further solidified its standing as an economic powerhouse in the early 20th century when rubber exports commenced.

When the Federation of Malaya gained independence from the British in 1957, Klang embraced modernisation. The formation of the Klang Dis-

trict Council in 1971, later elevated to municipal status in 1977, marked a structured approach to urban development and laid the groundwork for Klang's current status as a bustling township.

Presently, Klang's skyline mirrors the harmonious coexistence of its colonial past with Malay, Indian, and Chinese cultural influences and contemporary architecture.

A change of status

Efforts to preserve historic buildings underscore the city's commitment to honouring its heritage while embracing sustainable urban development principles.

The recent approval to rename Klang Municipal Council (MPK) as Majlis Bandar Raya DiRaja Klang (MBRK) marks a significant milestone.

The renaming carries cultural significance, with the new emblem featuring the Sultan Suleiman Royal Mosque and Jambatan Kota representing a fusion of tradition and modernity.

The choice of *bunga melur* (jasmine) as the official flower symbolises purity, while the city council's white, red, and yellow flag adds vibrancy to Klang's visual identity.

Pending the Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah Alhaj's approval, Klang will become the fourth city in Selangor, a status already conferred to Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam, and Subang Jaya.

This follows the Cabinet's agreement in July 2023 for Klang to be given city status based on its sustainable income and population of 1.1 million, with MPK

boasting an annual income exceeding RM100 million.

When that happens, Klang's landscape will no doubt be reshaped. Proposed amendments to Draft Local Plan 2035 focus on land use, building regulations, and flood mitigation measures, preparing the city for significant infrastructure projects like the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL).

Increased industrial land allocations signify Klang's commitment to economic expansion, envisioning inclusive urban planning and development with input from residents and stakeholders for a collaborative approach.

The Economic Development Zone of the Selangor Maritime Gateway (ZPE SMG) is another major project aimed at elevating Klang's profile, leading to extensive development along Sungai Klang.

Set to spearhead the status change is Datin Paduka Noraini Roslan, who was appointed as Klang's first mayor on Jan 3.

Serving as MPK president for two terms from 2022, Noraini was also Subang Jaya's first mayor and oversaw its transition into a city in October 2020.

Noraini also served as Hulu Selangor District Council president in 2017, as Kuala Selangor District Council president (from 2011 to early 2017), at the Petaling Jaya City Council (from 2010 to 2011), and as MPK Town Planning Department head (from 1989 to 2010).

Besides her experience in managing local councils, she is a qualified town planner with a master's degree in regional planning from North Carolina University in the United States.

An exciting future

As Malaysia's largest port and the world's 13th top container port, Port Klang is a strategic hub for international trade.

The Westport, integral to Klang's economic success, is identified as the terminus of the proposed East Coast Rail Link project, which will additionally enhance its global connectivity.

Klang will further integrate into Selangor's transportation network by introducing the KTM Komuter and the upcoming LRT3 line by March 1, 2025.

Klang will officially receive its city status in February. This will help to bolster the Selangor government's pursuit of establishing a Greater Klang Valley administration, a plan championed by Menteri Besar Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari.

The concept of a Greater Klang Valley, encompassing four local authorities (Shah Alam, Petaling Jaya, Subang Jaya and Klang), was crafted to serve as a model metropolis not only for Malaysia but also for Southeast Asia.

With its rich historical background, the elevation to city status is seen as a catalyst for Klang to evolve into a sustainable city offering extensive economic opportunities.

Its evolution into a city epitomises a narrative of adaptability and progress.

From its colonial past to its anticipated royal city status, it continues to navigate challenges, embracing its heritage while aspiring for a sustainable and dynamic future.

Anticipated changes in infrastructure, economic focus, and cultural symbolism would position Klang as not just a city, but a thriving and culturally-rich metropolis in the making.

By YASMIN RAMLAN

THE annual Thaipusam celebration features a chariot procession that offers devotees of the Hindu faith an opportunity to express their unwavering devotion to Lord Murugan, the warrior god.

The procession includes pulling the chariot through the streets, where the metaphoric journey is often regarded as a spiritual passage that devotees undertake in their quest for purification and self-realisation.

Thousands of Hindus from all across Malaysia come together to celebrate the festival, which falls during a full moon in the tenth month in the Tamil calendar, known as Thai.

Since only some people are able to personally show their devotion at the temple during Thaipusam, the procession is an important means of bringing divine blessings to the devotees, said Former Malaysia Hindu Sangam (MHS) president Datuk RS Mohan Shan.

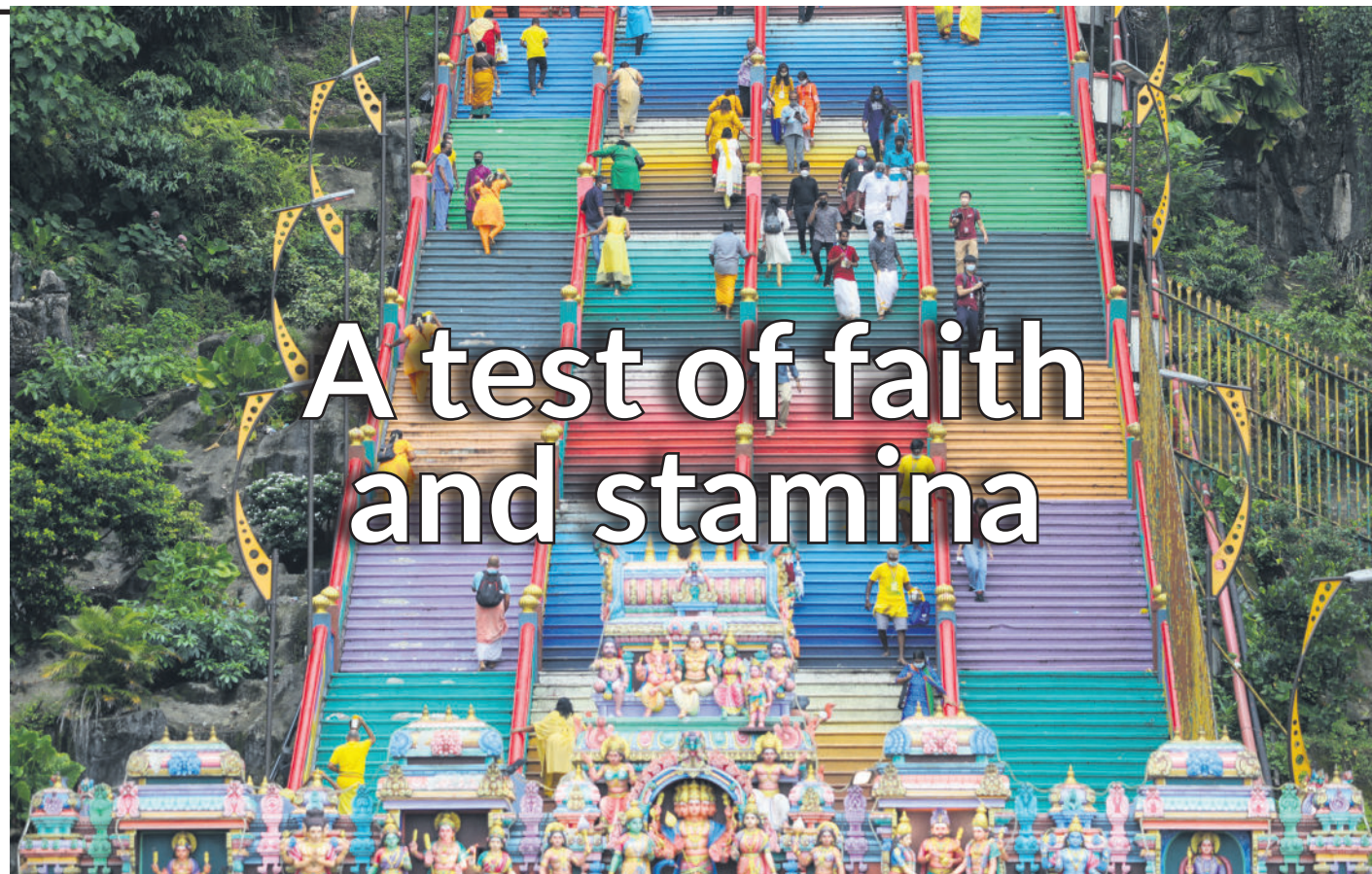
"Hindus believe that the god would appear to all of their devotees once a year to provide blessings. That is the fundamental significance behind the chariot procession."

"As going to the temple isn't possible for everyone, the procession is a means by which the devotees receive God's blessings," he told *Selangor Journal*.

Mohan said the festival holds significant value to the Hindu community in Malaysia and is celebrated on a grand scale in places like Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Sungai Petani, Kedah, and Ipoh.

"In Kuala Lumpur, worshippers travel one day earlier from the Sri Maha Mariamman temple at Jalan Tun HS Lee to the Batu Caves temple."

"The same goes for other places like Penang. It is not just a physical journey but one that holds deep, symbolic meaning. It represents the devotees' commit-



ment, faith, and willingness to make sacrifices," he said.

Milk pots of devotion

The procession in Kuala Lumpur is set to take place on Jan 23 at 9 pm in preparation for the Thaipusam celebration on Jan 25. The procession will continue until the afternoon or evening of the following day, covering a distance of around 12 kilometres.

The celebration includes carrying 'kavadis', which are elaborate structures adorned with decorations, and flowers. Some devotees would also have their skin pierced with metal skewers.

Dressed in vibrant yellow garments, the devotees would usually arrive one week before the festival to make vows and pray to Lord Murugan. Mohan said they would

often hold prayer sessions and practise a strict vegetarian diet for several weeks.

In Kuala Lumpur, worshippers would walk barefoot up 272 steps to reach the Batu Caves temple. They also carry 'paal kudam' or milk pots on their head as an offering to Lord Murugan.

Every year, the festivities would attract not just Hindus but Malaysians of other faiths and tourists from abroad. Approximately 100,000 people would travel to Kuala Lumpur just to visit the Batu Caves.

"It's an enjoyable moment to follow the chariot. It takes time. It takes a whole night. Most of the people who carry milk pots and follow the chariot will be reaching the next day, in the afternoon or evening."

"It shows how the worshippers devote themselves to God. That's the main thing. There are also some followers singing devotional songs. From my personal experience, that is very enjoyable," said Mohan.

Some do's and don'ts

According to the Batu Caves temple chairman, Tan Sri R. Nadarajah (*pic*), the 21-foot tall and five-ton chariot that will venture to the largest temple in Selangor is ready for the procession.

He said the preparations, which included cleaning, rewiring, polishing, and greasing the chariot, took over a month and a crew of 10 people.

"We are expecting more than 123,000 people to be walking along the road, and it is increasing each year," he said when met at his office in Batu Caves.

To guarantee the security of the worshippers and tourists, Nadarajah high-

lighted that security forces, including police from Dang Wangi, Sentul, and Gombak, and members of Rela, would be present.

Nadarajah noted that only traditional music is allowed at the main entrance of the temple.

"We have prohibited the use of bongo drums. I have already listed the do's and don'ts, but we can only make limitations at the main gate."

"It is also important to note that liquor and cigars are strictly prohibited within the temple grounds."

Backbone of the event

Mohan said that across the country, over a thousand volunteers will be guaranteeing the safety of all involved and ensuring a seamless experience.

Making note of the potential disruptions that may arise, he highlighted the crucial presence of dedicated volunteers like members of the Hindu Sangam.

"Volunteers are indispensable for Thaipusam. Relying solely on temple committees is not enough. Our volunteers form the backbone of the event, ensuring order and security."

"Sometimes unpleasant things will occur, like people causing trouble to the devotees and the procession. But the temples have their own people, their own volunteers. The Hindu Sangam also has its own task force."

Mohan said there will also be volunteers tasked to provide food and free meals to devotees, a selfless act known as 'annadhanam'. It is highly charitable and one that speaks of true devotion, he added.



By DANIAL DZULKIFLY

THE Selangor government has given great emphasis to empowering youths in the state with education and has offered various initiatives to students, such as free tuition and scholarships to aid in the learning process.

Despite the state administration, through Yayasan Selangor, disbursing RM40 million in education assistance and scholarships from 2018 to 2023, there exists a significant awareness gap among the people of Selangor about the education assistance programmes that are available.

Lim Yi Wei, a recently appointed member of the Selangor State Scholarship Fund board, has stressed the urgent need for enhanced advocacy to raise awareness about the state scholarship fund and the affiliated organisations providing cash assistance for education.

This is particularly crucial as students, especially those pursuing tertiary education, face a host of challenges, like escalating academic fees.

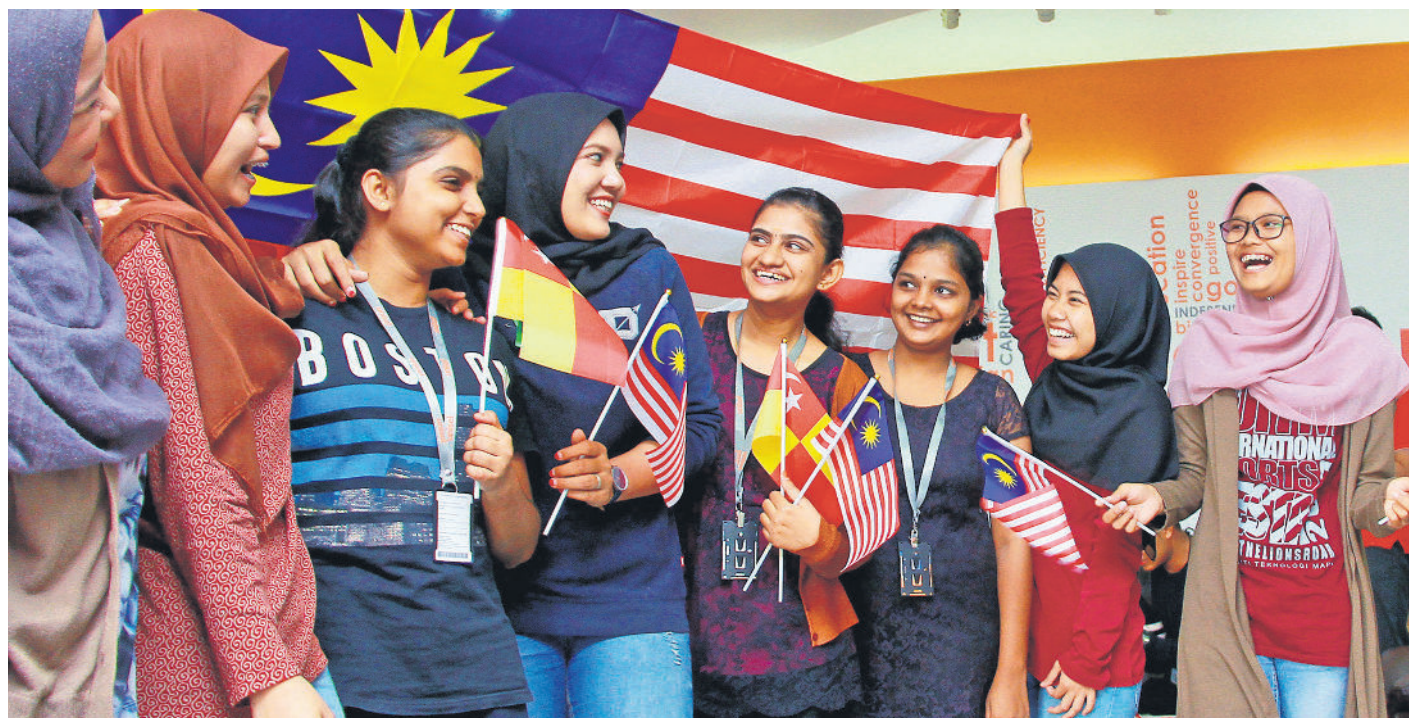
To address this information gap, Lim highlighted the board's pivotal role in heightening awareness about the diverse financial aid accessible to students.

"I think a lot of people aren't aware that there are so many types of scholarships listed on our website, and I think those interested thought it is only limited to certain educational aids. Apart from scholarships to universities, we also assist students pursuing secondary education," she said in a recent interview with *Selangor Journal*.

Lim's call for greater advocacy is aimed at ensuring that the Selangor State Scholarship Fund reaches its intended beneficiaries and extends support to a broader range of students across different levels of education.

Another aid programme is the Selangor Bitara special scholarship, which provides full scholarships

Securing a future for Selangor's youths



for Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees at the 50 top universities under the 2023 Times Higher Education Ranking by Subject or the QS World University Ranking.

However, the programme requires its participants to submit a research proposal that would also bring benefits to the state.

Stem the brain drain

Lim emphasised that the Selangor administration is not solely focused on providing educational assistance; it is actively spearheading the creation of a robust workforce development ecosystem.

This approach aims to nurture and retain a highly skilled workforce, especially individuals who have pursued education and gained experience abroad, encouraging them to contribute to the prosperity of their home state.

Highlighting one of these initiatives, Lim pointed to the Selangor Lab Partnership Programme, which seeks to strengthen collaboration between academia and industry stakeholders.

"If we examine the plans outlined in the 2024 budget, which I

find particularly intriguing, there is a notable emphasis on the life sciences. Additionally, the Selangor Lab Partnership Programme is a commendable step forward in establishing a conducive ecosystem for highly skilled workers," she said.

This programme functions as a dedicated research and development platform, aiming to seamlessly integrate theoretical knowledge from educational institutions with practical applications across various industries.

However, Lim stressed the importance of a nationwide review of salary schemes and advocated for implementing progressive policies prioritising the training and retention of skilled workers.

This strategic approach aims to counteract the brain drain, ensuring that talented individuals are educated locally and incentivised to contribute their expertise to the economic development of Selangor and the nation, Lim added.

"Firstly, the issue of salary needs to be addressed. It must be competitive with what they can earn overseas.

"The second aspect is the ecosystem, especially for advanced expertise, which requires a comprehensive ecosystem to maximise their potential within the system.

"I had the opportunity to meet some Malaysian students at Harvard back in 2018 who expressed their reluctance to return due to these factors. They believed they would have better opportunities working at the forefront of sciences and collaborating with the best in the field there," she said.

Educating the Orang Asli

Lim also expressed the need to expand assistance through the state scholarship fund to the Orang Asli community.

The state has currently allocated full scholarships for five members of the Orang Asli community to pursue tertiary education and 10 for secondary school for 2023.

However, out of five slots for tertiary education, only four were taken up, revealed Lim.

"Broadly speaking, motivating them to attend school is challenging due to various factors. However, we must expand assistance to this community, especially in the form of scholarships for secondary education," adding that help at this stage would spur better interest and better graduation rates for them to attend tertiary education.

Recently, the state government announced that they are working in collaboration with the Orang Asli Development Department (JakoA) to enhance the rights and progress of the Orang Asli community.

Some of these initiatives, due to start early this year, will concentrate on educational and career improvement programmes, along with infrastructure development.

Collaborations are planned, particularly in human capital development and welfare, encompassing initiatives for education, career enhancement, welfare, health, and community development.



BATC set to draw 20,000 fans

By **SOFIA NASIR**

SHAH ALAM - The Badminton Asia Team Championships (BATC) 2024, to be held at the Setia Alam Convention Centre from Feb 13 to 18, is expected to draw more than 20,000 fans from around Malaysia and abroad.

State executive councillor for sports Najwan Halimi said Selangor will be the host venue for the second year in a row.

"This shows how much the Selangor government is committed to investing in, and growing, the sports industry in the state," said Najwan at a press meet, here on Jan 18.

"By hosting, we are also given the opportunity to showcase Selangor and encourage more tourists to come, which will help the local economy."

Also at the event were Datuk Kenny Goh, the secretary general of the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) and the executive director of the Selangor State Sports Council (MSNS), Mohamad Nizam Marjugi.

Goh said that Selangor has once again been chosen to host the BATC as it did an excellent job last year.



Even though the number of Covid-19 infections was still high then, Selangor was adept and resourceful in every aspect of organising the championship, he added.

"Selangor made a bid to host, and because it did the job well last year, we de-

cided it was the right decision to award them as organisers again.

"Even though Covid-19 restrictions were in place last year, many fans came. This time around we expect an even bigger show," said Goh.

BATC 2024 will showcase Asia's best players from 26 countries, including China, Japan, India, Indonesia, Singapore, Kazakhstan and the United Arab Emirates.

Tickets can be purchased at sel-batc2024.com.

Exhibition tells life story of legendary Sidek brothers

SHAH ALAM - The state is projecting a staggering 20,000 visitors to the 'Sons of Sidek' exhibition that started in Nov 2023 and will run till April this year at the Sultan Alam Shah Museum.

State executive councillor for culture Borhan Aman Shah said the free exhibition has already attracted over 5,000 visitors since its opening, with the figure set to increase during the school holidays next month.

"We will also cooperate with various quarters, including education institutions, to invite more students to visit. Parents are encouraged to come and see for themselves the success of the sons of Sidek in the badminton scene.

"The state government hopes the achievement of Sidek's children will inspire more young people to take up badminton," he told reporters after officiating the exhibition at the Auditorium Daeng Chelak, here, on Jan 9.

Borhan also thanked the Sidek brothers for agreeing to showcase their personal collections, including medals and trophies they won nationally and globally.

"The contribution of collections to the Selangor Malay Customs and Heritage Corporation (Padat), both permanently or on loan, is truly appreciated. I hope it will encourage more people to contribute their valuable collections to the museum," he said.

The ongoing exhibition narrates the success story of Datuk Sidek Abdullah Kamar in successfully grooming his five sons — Datuk Misbun, Datuk

Razif, Datuk Seri Jalani, Abdul Rahman and Datuk Abdul Rashid — into world-renowned badminton players in the backyard of his home at Kampung Kanchong Darat, Banting, Kuala Langat.

Among the items showcased are medals from the BWF World Championships, the All England Open Badminton Championships, the Commonwealth Games, the Asian Games, the SEA Games, and other awards accorded to the five siblings.

In his speech, Borhan said the state government is pushing to get Sidek's family home in Kanchong Darat to be declared a national heritage house, which can potentially be a tourist and heritage attraction.

This also aligns with Selangor's effort to promote tourism ahead of the Visit Selangor Year 2025.

"I hope the matter will get the approval of the Sidek family so the state government can take the next course of action," he said.

Meanwhile, when met, Misbun commended the Selangor administration for its proposal but said he must confer with his family on the matter first.

"It is a great proposal, as the house is where we siblings started our badminton journey. It's our pride, and many memories are there," he said.

Borhan had previously said the house would remain the property of Sidek's family and not that of the state government or the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry, even if it is declared a national heritage building.

MSNS: Sukma athletes showing commitment

SHAH ALAM - The Selangor contingent is diligently preparing for the 21st Malaysia Games (Sukma) in Sarawak this coming August.

Selangor State Sports Council (MSNS) executive director Mohamad Nizam Marjugi said training for the 37 events confirmed for the games has been actively underway since August last year.

"The preparations are going well, and it is clearly evident that all athletes and teams are committed towards this edition of Sukma," he said when contacted.

When asked about Selangor's medal targets, Nizam said this will depend on the number of sports contested, a decision which will be made by the Youth and Sports Ministry and the National Sports Council at a meeting on Jan 22.

"We are still waiting for the relevant authorities' decisions. Once it is finalised, MSNS will set the medal target, taking into account several factors for assessment.

"But there are several events in which the contingent is expected to shine, like archery, table tennis, athletics, and shooting," he said.

The 21st Sukma in Sarawak is scheduled to take place from Aug 17 to 24. Selangor was the overall champion in the 2016 Sukma, also held in Sarawak.

On Nov 17, state executive councillor for sports Mohd Najwan Halimi said Selangor is aiming for the top three positions in the upcoming games.

He said this target, decided by the MSNS, was set after an assessment was made on the athletes' level of preparation and performance.

"We have looked at each athlete's current situation and potential through monitoring and assessment during the preparation period," Najwan said.

Melting pot of heritage

Klang is set to become Selangor's fourth city — after Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam, and Subang Jaya — and Malaysia's 20th. Ahead of its official ceremony in February, here are some of Klang's main historical attractions.



Klang Royal Town Mosque (Masjid Bandar Diraja Klang)

The mosque, built on the banks of Sungai Klang, was previously called Masjid Klang Utara before Sultan Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah Alhaj officiated it on his 64th birthday.



Klang Railway Station

One of the first railway lines in Malaysia, opened from Kuala Lumpur to Klang in September 1886.



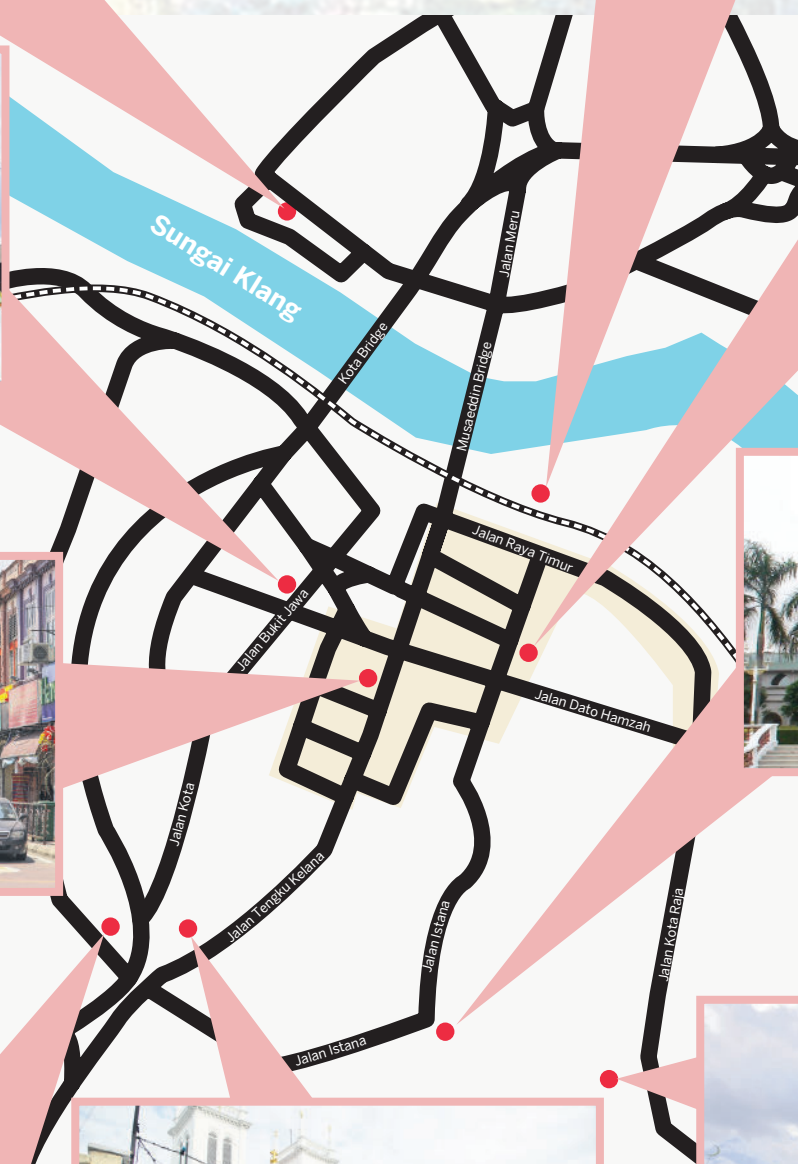
Sri Nagara Thendayuthapani Temple

The 150-year-old temple is one of the oldest in Klang and continues to be a significant gathering place for Hindu devotees.



Jalan Tengku Kelana or Little India

Showcasing an abundance of sights, sounds, and scents from a plethora of businesses and booths lining the main road and several alleys is Malaysia's largest Indian street.



Sultan Abdul Aziz Royal Gallery

Built in 1909, the museum tells the origins of the Selangor Sultanate, which dates back to 1766.



Alam Shah Palace

The royal palace in Selangor was built in 1960 and was renovated and expanded prior to the coronation of Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah in 2003.



Guan Yin Temple

The oldest temple in Malaysia was built in 1892 and was restored and proclaimed a state heritage site in 2003 by Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah Alhaj.



Church of Our Lady of Lourdes

The Gothic architecture with beautiful stained glass panels is what distinguishes the Roman Catholic church, built in 1928.



Sultan Sulaiman Royal Mosque

The building is a 1930s masterpiece of architecture with combined Islamic, Western Art Deco, and Neoclassical elements designed by British architects. Its grounds house the royal mausoleum of the late Sultan Salahuddin, with the Royal Stairs directly linking it to the Alam Shah Palace.