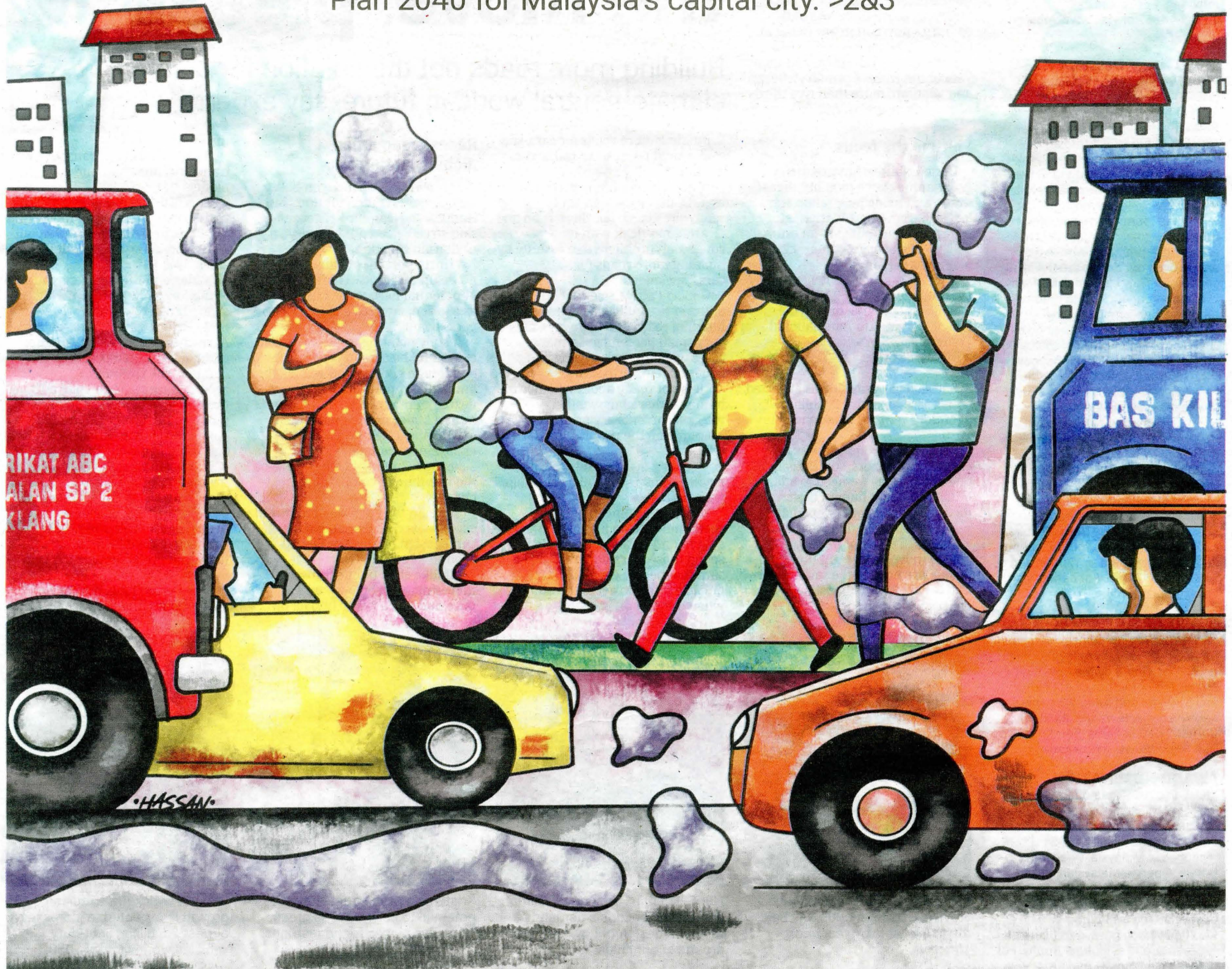


Low-carbon lifestyle

Kuala Lumpur City Hall is working towards striking a balance between carbon emissions and absorption through its Low-Carbon Society Blueprint 2030 and Draft Structure Plan 2040 for Malaysia's capital city. >2&3





By **SHALINI RAVINDRAN**
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'Green options on the move, please'

Building more roads not the solution for a safer climate-neutral world in future, say experts

MOBILITY is one of the most important tools that cities have in fighting climate change.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Malaysia, more than 70% of the country's population are living in cities or urban areas.

Data shows that cities consume 78% of the world's primary energy, and generate more than two-thirds of all carbon emissions.

Shifting the focus

United Nations Environment Programme active mobility, digitalisation and mode integration team leader Carly Gilbert-Patrick said transport contributed to an estimated 22% of global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).

"Within that, 73% is generated by cars and trucks."

She was speaking during the recent virtual 12th International Conference on World-Class Sustainable Cities 2021 (WCSC 2021).

She said car growth was expected to increase to almost 2.5 billion light-duty vehicles worldwide by 2050.

"Transport is one of the six largest emitting sectors, so it is really one of the areas we need to address.

"It is all about human design and focusing on the needs of people."

She pointed out that walking and cycling as a mode of transport was able to move six to eight times more people per hour in the same space as a car, and with almost near-zero emissions.

Building more roads for cars, she said, would not resolve traffic congestion.

"Cities keep building more roads as a means of solution, and I can safely say that so far, there is no one city that has dealt with its congestion problems successfully by building more roads for cars," she added.

Gilbert-Patrick said that out of the entire budget allocated for building roads and highways, only a very small percentage in many cases went towards cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.

"It is not really about whether the money is there but whether the governments are prioritising spending on the people who need it the most.

"Walking and cycling are completely and directly linked to public transport.

"If you are going to spend millions on a public transport system and buses, you need to just spend those extra dollars to make sure that people can walk or cycle safely to get to the bus and when they get off the bus."

Redesigning urban mobility patterns

Meanwhile, Copenhagen-based Gehl Architects director and team lead Esben Neander Kristensen said streets need not just serve a utilitarian function.

"Thirty percent of cities are made up of streets. There is plenty of potential here to look at streets as a green, attractive place for pedestrians."

Just by planting trees, the greenery would be able to generate its own micro-climate and reduce the ambient temperature by five degrees, an attractive option for humid Malaysia, he highlighted.

Greenpeace Malaysia public engagement campaigner Nur Sakeenah Omar said cities were on the frontline of combating climate change.

She said the current climate and ecological crisis demanded a radical redesign of how we moved around in our cities.

"Unlike cars, public transport moves many people around at once and has a lower impact on

the environment.

"By transforming transport, we transform our cities and save the planet.

"It is estimated that by 2050, with urban populations more than doubling in size, nearly seven out of 10 people in the world will live in cities.

"Cities and their citizens must be at the forefront of delivering a safer climate-neutral world by mid-century, as stated in the Paris Agreement, to avert a catastrophic climate and possible future pandemics," she stressed.

Nur Sakeenah said local authorities and governments too must redesign or shift urban mobility patterns to more climate-friendly, equitable and renewable modes.

These can include increasing car-free spaces and prioritising walking, cycling, shared vehicles and public transport, as well as investing in their development for interconnected, cleaner mobility solutions that are accessible to everyone.

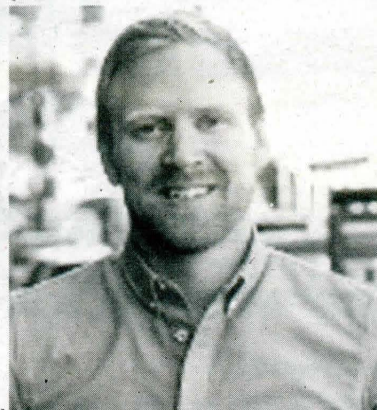
"For far too long, the car has shaped our cities, landscapes and,



Mahadi says a free electric bus service, Go KL City Bus, will be made available by year end.



Nur Sakeenah: The current climate and ecological crisis demands a radical redesign of how we move around in our cities.



Kristensen says streets have the potential to be viewed as green, attractive places for pedestrians.



Gilbert-Patrick: Data indicates car growth is expected to increase to almost 2.5 billion light-duty vehicles worldwide by 2050.



Walking and cycling (right) are modes of transport that are more space-efficient, and with near-zero emissions. — Photos: CHAN TAK KONG and AZHAR MAHFOF/The Star



Single-occupancy vehicles are the main cause of traffic congestion in the country's cities like Kuala Lumpur.

often, even our lives.

"People have been made dependent on private motorised transportation through poor urban planning and lack of access to public alternatives, among other factors. This must end.

"We need to make climate-friendly transport easily accessible, usable and attractive," said Nur Sakeenah.

She pointed out another aspect that should be improved on — better public transport.

"Electrification of public transport vehicles, for example, will help to reduce carbon emission, while increased frequency of public transport service will encourage wider usage of these systems."

She also touched on the need for integrating nature.

"Many studies have highlighted the importance of proximity and easy access to high-quality green spaces that can be used for recreation," she added.

Turning plans into action

For city planners such as Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL), the challenge now is to shift its focus from formulating action plans to implementing curated ones as visible actions.

Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Mahadi Che Ngah said the widespread use of private vehicles was one of the main contributors of greenhouse gases (GHG), particularly in Kuala Lumpur which remained a centre of eco-

nomics activity.

He said Kuala Lumpur had recorded a temperature increase of 1.64 degrees Celsius over a 30-year period (between 1989 and 2019).

"The city has seen extraordinary rainfall, rising temperatures, frequent occurrences of flash floods and freak storms.

"Early this year, we recorded 120mm rainfall per hour, which is double the usual amount of 60mm per hour.

"These outcomes are an undeniable reminder that carbon emissions must be reduced in order to make Kuala Lumpur resilient to climate change," he said during WCSC 2021.

He added that DBKL had formed a specific goal to create a balance between carbon emissions and carbon absorption via its Kuala Lumpur Low-Carbon Society Blueprint 2030 and Kuala Lumpur Draft Structure Plan 2040.

Within its mobility plans, DBKL is increasing infrastructure to promote the use of public transportation and electric vehicles in the city.

"In line with our goals, we will enhance feeder bus routes to ease mobility and convenience for the people.

"Additionally, a free electric bus service, Go KL City Bus, will be made available by the end of the year," Mahadi said.

He added this was part of the first zero-carbon township initiative project in Wangsa Maju.

For the past several years, DBKL

has also been working on and carrying out projects aimed at improving walkability and cycling in Kuala Lumpur.

Under the framework of the Kuala Lumpur Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan 2019-2028, it seeks to increase the quantity and enhance the quality of walking and cycling facilities.

Some of DBKL's past pedestrianisation efforts saw the local authority upgrading the pedestrian walkways along Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Masjid India, Medan Bunus, Lorong Bunus 1 river promenade, Jalan Melayu, Lanai Seni and Medan Pasar.

More recently, the riverside walkway was upgraded from Dataran Merdeka to Mid Valley City via Brickfields, while a 13km bicycle and pedestrian lane along Sungai Bunus, between Section One Wangsa Maju and the Kuala Lumpur city centre, is expected to be completed by the end of next year.

Closer to home, DBKL is looking at closing its carparks on Fridays to encourage its employees to take public transport.

Mahadi said it wanted DBKL workers to lead the way in fostering a low-carbon lifestyle.

In September, DBKL also gave the My30 travel pass to 1,000 employees to encourage them to take public transport to work in the hopes that it would serve as an example to others to reduce their private vehicle usage.