

Big shoes to fill

As the last day of the Kuala Lumpur mayor's tenure on Sept 30 draws nearer, city folk begin to wonder about a likely successor to Datuk Seri Mahadi Che Ngah. While a few names are floated around, residents want a capable leader at the helm who understands the people's needs.

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Guessing game: Who will eventually be the new Kuala Lumpur mayor when Mahadi (left) retires? Will it be retired former DBKL executive director (Socio-economic Development) Datuk Ibrahim Yusoff (centre), DBKL executive director (Planning) Datuk Sulaiman Mohamed (right), or will it be an outsider?



Ibrahim (right) has served under several mayors and Federal Territories ministers.

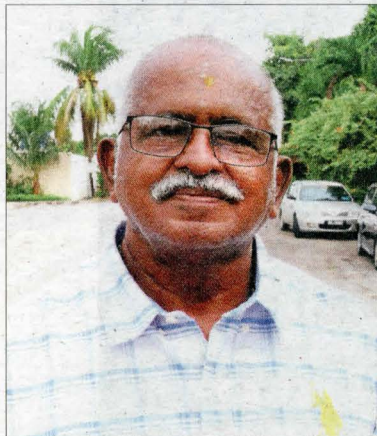
Possible candidates for KL's top post

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City folk want a mayor who meets the people personally and solve problems that they face



Mohd Zainuddin feels that a mayor chosen from within DBKL would serve the people better.



Balaindran says residents want a mayor who implements policies for the benefit of the people.



Wong says residents want a mayor who appreciates volunteerism by communities.



By **BAVANI M**
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THE tenure of Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Mahadi Che Ngah will expire at the end of this month.

Mahadi, who served as the 13th mayor of the capital city, came back from retirement to take on the two-year contract on Sept 30, 2020.

After having served in Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) for over 35 years, Mahadi retired as its executive director (Planning) in 2018.

Due to his impeccable service record, he was brought back on contract to serve as advisor to his predecessor Datuk Seri Nor Hisham Ahmad Dahlan on planning matters pertaining to the Draft Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020.

When Nor Hisham's contract expired, Mahadi was appointed as mayor.

With just a few days remaining before his term expires, it is business as usual for Mahadi, who has shown no signs of slowing down.

He has been going to the ground every day, checking on the city's flood management preparations as well as attending back-to-back meetings that tend to go on until midnight.

Guessing game

However, the guessing game has started on whether Mahadi will be replaced or have his contract extended.

As the country braces for a general election, some quarters feel it is not the time for a new person to helm DBKL.

There are also those who feel that once Parliament is dissolved, a caretaker government would benefit from having a friendly mayor on its side.

Talk is rife that Federal

Territories Minister Datuk Dr Shahidan Kassim wants an Umno-friendly mayor well-versed with DBKL matters and the city by-laws.

Even though Mahadi fits the bill, some think his term will not be extended.

"Mahadi is passionate about the green agenda. He was so persistent with it that you can now see the fruits of his labour in Wangsa Maju," said a senior DBKL director who did not want to be identified.

Some opined that Mahadi, who kick-started green initiatives like the Wangsa Maju Carbon Neutral Growth Centre, Low-Carbon Society Blueprint among other programmes to move Kuala Lumpur into a carbon-neutral city, should be given more time to see his projects through.

"But he faced a lot of resistance from his own colleagues in DBKL, many of whom are his peers, who started working there

the same time he did over 30 years ago.

"Of course some feel others should be given a chance to move up too," said a source.

A retired DBKL director, who served for over three decades and worked with several mayors, including the late Tan Sri Elyas Omar, however, said DBKL would benefit having an outsider.

"Sometimes an outsider can be good for DBKL. Someone with a fresh perspective on things and who is willing to learn.

"A person who is not part of an establishment sometimes has good ideas on how things could be better managed," he added.

"Take former mayor Nor Hisham for instance. He was the former Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ) president, and there was (former mayor) Tan Sri Ahmad Phesal Talib who was Penang Island City Council president (MPPP).

"They were willing to learn and earned the respect of DBKL staff. At Nor Hisham's farewell, seniors officers were in tears,"

Residents foresee safety, hygiene issues from Section 12 food park

By SHEILA SRI PRIYA
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A ROW of colourful food cabins at a former carpark opposite Universiti Malaya (UM) in Section 12, Petaling Jaya in Selangor, is drawing everyone's attention.

The entrance to the carpark along Jalan Prof Diraja Ungku Aziz has a signage identifying the place as "Tapak Food Park".

The carpark is where several bungalows were previously located.

While some Section 12 residents welcome the future street eatery, they are cautious about problems.

Former Section 12 Residents Association (RA) president Mahan Singh Gill said the cleanliness aspect must be the key focus once it opens for business.

He was concerned about the safety of the pedestrians, especially university students, when they cross the busy road.

"I think it is all right to have this eatery area. However, maintaining cleanliness is important. Accessibility to this place is important, too.

"At the moment, there is no proper crossing and this matter must be addressed. We do not want any accidents here.

"I also do not see a proper walkway leading to this place especially for seniors like me," said Mahan.

Another former Section 12 RA president Tan Sri Megat Najmuddin Megat Khas was concerned about waste management of the place once business starts.

"This place will be rat-infested if there is no proper waste management. I think it is not a good move to have eateries here.

"I live about 50m away from this spot and I don't want this," he said, adding that residents' welfare must be taken care of.

"Previously when it was a parking area, it was not utilised

because it was not well maintained.

"Turning this place into an eatery spot at the expense of residents is not the way to go," said Megat Najmuddin.

Sue Sidhu, a Section 12 resident, said the food park was a good idea to provide options for UM staff, students and those who need to spend long hours at the hospital.

"It used to be a dark place and it was linked to a semi jungle.

"I used to see suspicious characters hanging out there at night. This food place would change the landscape," she said.

Sue noted that it would also help generate economic growth.

As for the potential problem of rodents, she said the Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) would need to carry out frequent inspections.

MBPJ did not provide feedback on this matter before press time, while the land owner refused to comment.



Concerned parties have mixed views about these colourful food cabins at Tapak Food Park along Jalan Prof Diraja Ungku Aziz.

Sulaiman (left) has the added advantage of working as a special officer for two Federal Territories ministers. He is seen here with Mahadi (middle) and DBKL Building Control Department director Norizan Sulaiman.

Right: Mahadi (left) was brought back on contract to serve as advisor to his predecessor Nor Hisham (second from left). Ibrahim is on the right holding the map.



he said, adding that an outsider would have little chance of political affiliation.

An in-house candidate?

However, some quarters who spoke to *StarMetro* on the condition of anonymity, said the city's new chief would most likely be an in-house candidate.

Apart from Mahadi, there have been only two DBKL officers who were appointed mayor — Datuk Ruslin Hasan in 2004 and Tan Sri Amin Nordin Abdul Aziz in 2015.

The rest had been civil servants from other agencies.

The candidate could also be someone who is retired, as both Nor Hisham and Mahadi were recalled after their retirement.

Potentially in the running is Datuk Sulaiman Mohamed, who is DBKL's executive director (Planning).

The 59-year-old town planner has vast experience, having worked with DBKL for decades.

Sulaiman also has the added advantage of working as a special officer for two Federal

Territories ministers — Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor and Datuk Seri Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin. Sulaiman is known for his easy-going and friendly nature.

The other possibility is former executive director (Socio-economic Development) Datuk Ibrahim Yusoff who retired in 2018.

Ibrahim too has served under several mayors and Federal Territories ministers.

He is also known for his friendly demeanour and is said to be still active and seen attending DBKL and ministry events despite having retired in November 2021.

A people's mayor

Feedback from community leaders in Kuala Lumpur show that many prefer a people-friendly mayor who would regularly go to the ground to meet residents.

"We want someone who is knowledgeable about DBKL administration and by-laws and friendly with the community,"

said Kampung Malaysia Raya Residents Association chairman Mohd Zainuddin Amran.

Mohd Zainuddin, who is also the committee member of Federal Territory Residents Representative Council (MPPW) for Bandar Tun Razak, said a candidate chosen from within DBKL would serve the people better.

Taman Desa Residents Association (TDRA) chairman Wong Chan Choy wants a mayor who would appreciate volunteerism by communities that worked hard to ensure the neighbourhood was safe and clean.

"We are volunteers and not involved in politics. We hope the future mayor will appreciate that," he said.

Echoing Wong and Mohd Zainuddin's sentiment is Taman Yarl's Rukun Tetangga chairman K. Balaindran.

He said the mayor must be approachable "like Mahadi, who was very easygoing and friendly".

"We want someone we can rely on. We also want a mayor who implements policies for the benefit of the people," he added.



Mahadi has been going to the ground daily and shows no signs of slowing down.