

22 MARCH 2023, THE STAR, STAR METRO, PG 4.

Eager for new blood with fresh ideas

Political analysts, city folk want next KL mayor to be people-centric, transparent and accountable

By **BAVANI M**
bavanim@thestar.com.my

KUALA Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Mahadi Che Ngah's tenure is set to end on March 31.

With less than 10 days to go, city folk are talking about who is going to be the next mayor.

Checks on the ground reveal mixed sentiments on the city's top post and the candidate who would be replacing Mahadi.

The general consensus seems to be favouring new leadership, and many also want a mayor who is accountable to the people.

"We need new blood. It does not matter if the mayor is not a Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) man, as long as he has the support of the DBKL team," said Taman Desa Residents Association vice-chairman Yap Bian Hwee.

"Traffic has worsened, floods still occur during heavy rain,

development has been haphazard and roadside stalls are increasing by the day.

"We are not seeing any change in the way things are currently being run," he added.

Intan Baiduri people's housing project's (PPR) safety manager Zaman Hury agreed that someone new should take on the position.

"The mayor's job has always been political. And even though Mahadi is a capable mayor who does a good job, it is time we get someone new," he added.

Brickfields resident Dr Christopher Nicholas echoed the sentiment.

"Competent, transparent and accountable – that's the mayor I want for Kuala Lumpur.

"We want a mayor that serves the people and not the politicians," he added.

Mahadi was appointed the 13th mayor of Kuala Lumpur in

October 2020.

He came back from retirement to take on a two-year contract.

His tenure expired on Sept 30, 2022, but he was given a six-month extension until the end of March 2023.

The former DBKL executive director (Planning) had retired in 2018 after serving DBKL for over 35 years.

Meanwhile, Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research senior fellow Dr Azmi Hassan said it was time to give the job of mayor to other capable individuals.

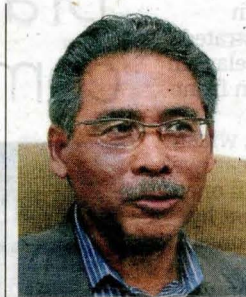
"Mahadi has been there for many years and has done a marvellous job managing the city.

"But I think DBKL will benefit from a new leader who has the same experience and capability as Mahadi and will bring new ideas.

"We need leaders who are bold and brave enough to make unpop-



Dr Jeniri says others should get a chance to serve as Kuala Lumpur mayor.



Dr Azmi says it is time to give the job of mayor to other capable individuals.



Mahadi's six-month extension ends on March 31.

ular but necessary decisions for the betterment of the city," he said.

Similarly, National Professors Council senior fellow Dr Jeniri Amir said others should be given the chance to serve as mayor.

"Opportunity should be given to experienced and qualified civil servants who have the aptitude, integrity and skills to take on the challenging job.

"Mahadi has had three decades to realise his mission and now, it is time to give someone else the chance," he said.

Some senior civil servants in DBKL also felt that the government needed to revise policies regarding contract extensions given to retired officers.

"The mandatory retirement age for a civil servant is 60.

"Any extension after that is on a special contract.

"By extending the contract of those who have retired, you are

closing the door for other senior officers to move up," said a DBKL director who did not wish to be identified.

"Bringing people back from retirement is also costly, as they get paid double wages.

"They get their pension and also a salary with all the perks included," he added.

In 2020, *The Star* reported that there were 1.6 million civil servants and as of July 2020, the ratio of public servants to the country's population was 1:20.

"Malaysia has one of the highest ratios of civil servants to population in the world and their salary and pension have started to eat into the government's operating budget," said a retired Kuala Lumpur mayor who wished to remain unnamed.

"It is time to change things. We need a sustainable approach," added the senior civil servant.