

**Exclusive**

# Building up the territories

Tackling urban poverty in Kuala Lumpur, getting Kampung Baru's redevelopment off the ground, improving the cities' maintenance culture, and enhancing Labuan as tourism hub top the agenda of FT's new minister. >2&3





# Poverty eradication a top priority

FT Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa says approach extends beyond providing aid to the poor

By BAVANI M and  
SHALINI RAVINDRAN  
metro@thestar.com.my

HAVING gone one year without a minister, the Federal Territories once again has someone at Cabinet level to oversee it.

This follows Dr Zaliha Mustafa, who was previously helming the Health Ministry, taking on the mantle of Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (PMD) in charge of the Federal Territories.

Her appointment comes at a crucial time, as the Federal Territories not only celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, but also has been without direction following Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's maiden Cabinet announcement in December 2022, which did away with the Federal Territories Ministry, and downgraded it to a department under the PMD.

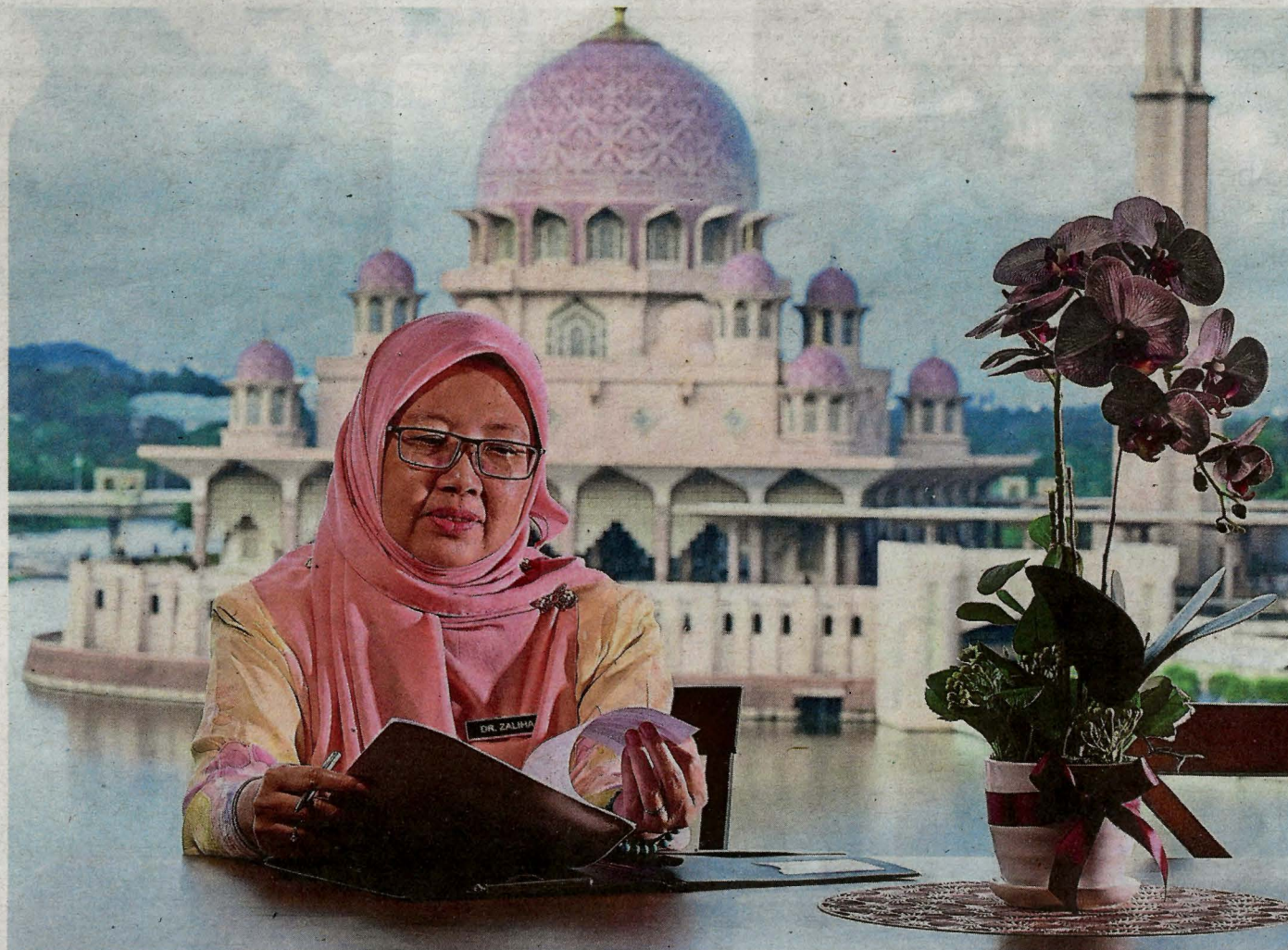
Dr Zaliha, 59, who is from Johor, shares with *StarMetro* her views on her new role and the challenges ahead.

She also touches on her strategic plans for urban development – particularly in Kampung Baru, tackling urban poverty, and infrastructure revitalisation of the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan.

**Q: After a little over a year of heading the Health Ministry, what were your thoughts when you were appointed as Minister for FT under the PMD?**

A: I looked at it as just another responsibility. Although this portfolio (Federal Territories) presents a challenge since it has been without a minister for almost a year, I will continue to uphold the mission and vision of the Prime Minister in elevating the Federal Territories to greater heights.

Undoubtedly, the Federal Territories are unique, comprising Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, and Labuan, each with its distinct roles: Kuala Lumpur as the capital city, Putrajaya as the administrative capital, and



Dr. Zaliha acknowledges that poverty eradication is a formidable challenge, but not unattainable. — Photo courtesy of JWP

Labuan as the financial and international business centre.

In terms of size, even though the three Federal Territories are not as large as some other states, their role in shaping the country's image is of immense importance.

**What will be your focus for the Federal Territories?**

In Kuala Lumpur, physical development is significant, yet there remains space and opportunity for further development.

We see considerable potential in Kampung Baru in Kuala Lumpur, as well as in Putrajaya and Labuan. Beyond physical development, I aim to concentrate on the socio-economic

advancement of residents across all three territories.

Additionally, I aspire to eradicate poverty in these areas.

Even though the Federal Territories, particularly Kuala Lumpur, are perceived as lands of opportunity, the high cost of living has significantly impacted many residents living in the city, especially the hardcore poor. These issues demand our urgent attention.

**What will your approach be to eradicating urban poverty?**

A significant portion of my work will focus on eradicating poverty. However, my approach extends beyond merely providing assistance; it involves the

implementation of an exit strategy that puts emphasis on career and business opportunities which are more sustainable.

This is so that the impoverished can surpass the poverty threshold and avoid falling back into destitution. It is a formidable challenge, I acknowledge, but not unattainable.

**What are your plans for Kampung Baru?**

Kampung Baru cannot be left behind, especially as everything around it has flourished. Although some land around it is reserved for Malay stakeholders, this should not be an excuse to neglect the area's development.

I understand that 88% of the

residents support the plans to develop the Malay enclave. Consequently, the Federal Territories Department (JWP) will persist in engaging with the residents who have not yet agreed to the development plans.

**The redevelopment of Kampung Baru has been a persistent challenge since the 1970s, mainly due to complications arising from its multiple ownerships. Former FT minister Khalid Abdul Samad suggested purchasing the land at RM1,000 per sq ft, offering up to RM850 in cash and the balance of RM150 in shares through a special purpose vehicle. However,**



Dr Zaliha says Kampung Baru, which is in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, should not be left behind especially since everything around it is flourishing. — AZMAN GHANI/The Star



Under the MYGrocer@Wilayah programme, food items like chicken, oil and eggs are sold at a subsidised rate. — Filepic





There have been numerous complaints about the lack of maintenance of facilities and infrastructure, such as this vandalised structure along the River of Life near Central Market in Kuala Lumpur, which the minister says must be addressed. — Filepic

**the proposal fell through. Will you be taking the same approach to Kampung Baru as your predecessor, or will you re-evaluate the offer?**

Every leader has their own method. I intend to adopt a different approach, but that said, I will not disregard the suggestions made by the former minister.

I will thoroughly review the matter before making any decisions. However, I am committed to ensuring that any plan benefits everyone involved, and I will strive to see this through.

Moving forward, the implementation will occur in stages. And the Federal Territories Department will have their work cut out for them to persuade those who remain undecided, to support the development.

We will conduct engagement sessions and town hall briefings with residents to listen to their hopes and concerns.

I believe that by the end of my term, we will have achieved significant new developments in Kampung Baru.

**What are your views on the poor infrastructure and maintenance culture of public facilities in the Federal Territories?**

I believe that the maintenance of facilities and infrastructure in the Federal Territories needs more attention.

I am also aware that there are workers who do not adhere to

the scope of maintenance work, leading to damage.

I believe such issues can be prevented if we find ways to facilitate these maintenance tasks and also look for methods to collaborate with other relevant agencies.

I also want to emphasise that public complaints must be acted upon promptly, and if there is a need to increase the workforce at the (government) agency level, this should be expedited.

These are all fundamental matters that need prioritisation. Improvement works must be carried out swiftly to uphold the department's (JWP) and agency's (local authorities) image in line with the Smart City aspiration, which encompasses Safe City, Healthy City, Hub of Technology, and Friendly City.

**What are your plans to make Labuan a tourism hub?**

Labuan has high potential due to its geographical location as an island. The potential to develop it into a tourism hub is encouraging. However, matters related to electrical and water infrastructures must be prioritised as these are basic necessities.

I aim to resolve these issues by next year. The government has allocated RM300mil to address these problems. If both of these issues can be resolved promptly, we can then focus on enhancing the economic and tourism aspects of Labuan.



Labuan tourism is set to get a boost from the Federal Government. — Filepic

# FT Dept initiatives to keep city folk from falling on hard times

CASES of families termed as "hardcore poor" in the Federal Territories have been successfully resolved, as of December 2023.

According to the Federal Territories Department (JWP), this was done in partnership with government agencies, private companies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and residents groups.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department in charge of Federal Territories Dr Zaliha Mustafa said JWP, along with its partner agencies, were continuously looking for ways to further support and uplift families out of poverty.

"Some of the initiatives include having engagement sessions with hardcore poor families, setting up special teams in each parliamentary constituency as well as bolstering entrepreneurial opportunities.

"Additionally, under the Baiti Jannati@Federal Territories home ownership programme, JWP would work with more private sector parties to raise funds and sponsor home ownership for the hardcore poor," she added.

Between 2016 and 2023, 330 hardcore poor families were beneficiaries of the programme.

This, along with other accomplishments (see graphics), make the Federal Territories stand out, said Dr Zaliha in an exclusive interview with *StarMetro*.

"Kuala Lumpur has always been a benchmark for Malaysia's progress and achievements.

"As early as 2016, Kuala Lumpur was recognised for achieving world standards in public transportation, including the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system that was under construction at that time.

"This advanced system is on par with those found in developed cities outside the country, such as San Francisco and New York."

She said with Kuala Lumpur's population reaching 2.35 million people, traffic congestion was a significant concern.

The solution for this, she said, was given priority in Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2040 (KLSP2040), with public transportation becoming the primary mode of connectivity for the city's residents.

"Various initiatives are proposed and planned to enhance these support facilities by 2040.

"These include interconnecting bus routes, park-and-ride facilities, and ensuring safe and comfortable pedestrian pathways to nearby transport hubs," she added.

Dr Zaliha said the department, along with Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL), had also taken steps to address the homeless population in the city.

"This includes setting up the homeless transit centres in Jalan Pahang and Medan Tuanku in 2016, which serve as

## Significant achievements by the Federal Territories

### HOUSING

- 66,493 Residensi Wilayah units completed/under construction/received development orders. Kuala Lumpur (61,446 units), Putrajaya (4,267) & Labuan (780).



- 47,781 eligible applicants received offers since 2013.

### SMART CITY MASTER PLANS

- As of 2023, DBKL has implemented 13 out of 28 smart city initiatives outlined in Kuala Lumpur Smart City Master Plan 2021-2025.



- Putrajaya Corporation (Ppj) implemented 49 out of 95 initiatives Putrajaya Smart City Blueprint.

- Labuan Corporation achieves nine out of 50 planned Smart City initiatives.

### YOUNG CITY ENTREPRENEURS PROGRAMME

- 1,122 kiosks set up for young entrepreneurs in KL and Putrajaya.



- Seven hot spot locations and 138 pit stops identified in KL for 250 food truckers.

- 330 families in People's Housing Programme and public housing have benefited from Program Baiti Jannati @ Wilayah Persekutuan to help hardcore poor own their own units.

- 4,500 petty traders registered under Federal Territories Free Trading Initiative (IWBB).

### SMY PROGRAMME

- MYGrocer@Wilayah – a grocery truck selling food items at a subsidised rate.

- MyMedic@Wilayah – 26,494 patients offered free basic medical consultation.



- MyJob@Wilayah – More than 3,000 jobseekers participated in a job matching programme.

- MYSchoolBus@Wilayah – 32,631 students received free school transport.

- MYFood@Wilayah – 9,511 households benefited.

- Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2040 (KLSP2040) gazetted Oct 19, 2023.

- GoKL buses introduced in Kuala Lumpur in 2012. It now has a fleet of 80 electric buses servicing 14 routes.

- Labuan Go Green programme – 30,125 coconut seedlings, 1,000 Musang King durian trees and Harum Manis mango trees planted.



- Labuan Corporation upgrades 35 stalls at Terminal Corner and Pasar Sentral, Labuan at RM4mil.

- Putrajaya has won Sustainable City Award from 2012 until now, Most Liveable Cities Award & ASEAN Clean Tourist City Standard Award (2024-2026).

Source: Federal Territories Dept (JWP)

*TheStar* graphics



More than 60,000 public housing units have been built or are in various stages of completion throughout the Federal Territories.

shelters and training centres.

"Through the JWP Job Placement Programme, 166 former homeless people were able to secure stable employment."

In Labuan, things are also looking up, she highlighted.

"Crew change activity, involving the exchange of crews in the oil and gas (O&G) industry, has also resumed in Labuan.

"This has positively impacted the local economy of Labuan, particularly the hospitality sector, food premises, service industries, and logistics that support the O&G sector," said Dr Zaliha.

She said this would boost Labuan's economy with the

arrival and departure of O&G crews of about 3,500 to 4,000 crew members per month.

In Putrajaya, the focus has been on drawing in more tourists to the Federal Government's administrative centre, she noted.

The various events and programmes such as Floria Diraja Putrajaya, Putrajaya Open Day, Light and Motion Putrajaya, and National Day celebration, saw an impressive growth in the number of domestic and international tourists between 2022 and 2023.

There were five million visitors in 2022, with figures increasing to almost 20 million in 2023. — **By BAVANI M and SHALINI RAVINDRAN**