



50 and thriving

In this special edition, *StarMetro* commemorates Kuala Lumpur's golden jubilee as a Federal Territory by looking at its transformation from a young city to a progressive and developing metropolis with plans for urban regeneration in the future besides taking environmental stewardship. **>2&3**



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AS KUALA Lumpur marks its golden jubilee as a Federal Territory, three former mayors recount their experiences helming the capital city to *StarMetro*. The three immediate predecessors to current mayor Datuk Kamarulzaman Salleh highlight some of the transformative changes Kuala Lumpur has undergone over the past half century.

They also share their insights into the challenges that lie ahead, including urban renewal and creating job opportunities for Kuala Lumpur's growing population.

The ex-mayors also list some of the achievements they are especially proud of during their tenure.

Q: What do you see as the city's most significant transformation over the past 50 years?

Datuk Seri Mahadi Che Ngah (Oct 1, 2020 to March 31, 2023)

Seeing Kuala Lumpur's transformation over the last 50 years is like witnessing a city reborn.

It all started with the first Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan in 1984, reshaping not just the infrastructure but the very soul of our city.

I remember the fragmented roads and basic drainage systems of the 1980s. Then, things changed.

We saw our road network evolve into an integrated system, connecting previously isolated areas like Wangsa Maju and Bukit Jalil.

These places transformed from outskirts into vibrant urban centres.

The public transportation overhaul was a remarkable leap towards sustainable and shared mobility.

The 1990s brought challenges, but we faced them head-on. Squatter settlements were transformed, uplifting entire communities.

Datuk Seri Nor Hisham Ahmad Dahlan (Oct 2, 2018 to Sept 30, 2020)

Born and raised in Kuala Lumpur, I have witnessed the city's transformations first-hand.

The evolution has been vast and varied, encompassing urbanisation, overdevelopment, construction of highways and significant shifts in migration and population growth.

During my childhood, it was rare to see foreign workers in the city, whether they were there legally or not.

However, the atmosphere of Kuala Lumpur today is noticeably different.

The community in the city tends to lean towards materialism and individualism, a stark contrast from the past.



Mahadi looking out at the city skyline and the Kuala Lumpur that he has had a hand in shaping.

Reflections of former KL mayors

Three who helmed Federal Territory say urban regeneration, sustainable development the way forward

"I find Kuala Lumpur more aesthetically pleasing now than it was years ago, thanks to the numerous parks and gardens."

Tan Sri Mohd Amin Nordin Abdul Aziz



Tan Sri Mohd Amin Nordin Abdul Aziz (July 18, 2015 to Sept 30, 2018)

Having resided and worked in Kuala Lumpur for nearly 50 years, the most noticeable changes for me have been the evolving traffic patterns and the transformation of the city's skyline.

Change is an inherent part of any growing metropolis responding to the needs of an expanding population. However, managing these demands effectively is crucial.

On a personal note, I find Kuala Lumpur more aesthetically pleasing now than it was years ago, thanks to the numerous parks and gardens.

Moreover, the rich cultural diversity of its inhabitants makes the city an attractive destination for tourists.

Q: What do you believe are the biggest challenges and opportunities facing Kuala Lumpur?

Mahadi: Kuala Lumpur stands at a crossroads of challenges and opportunities.

Sustainability emerges as a key focus, with the potential to achieve carbon neutrality.

Initiatives like transitioning to electric buses and embracing renewable energy sources are steps towards establishing Kuala Lumpur as a frontrunner in environmental stewardship.

Importantly, a revamped approach to stormwater management is critical.

Urban regeneration is pivotal for the future. As certain city areas show signs of ageing, they present opportunities for rejuvenation or complete redevelopment.

These transformations should prioritise sustainability, liveability and modern urban requirements while preserving heritage buildings and districts.

Additionally, acknowledging the city's demographic shifts and projecting the population for the next 50 years is crucial.

Future planning extends beyond infrastructure; it encompasses fostering social, economic and environmental sustainability for coming generations.

Mayors of Kuala Lumpur 1972 - 2024	
Tan Sri Lokman Yusof	Feb 1, 1972 – May 13, 1972
Tan Sri Yaacob Abdul Latiff	July 1, 1972 – Oct 31, 1981
Tan Sri Elyas Omar	Nov 1, 1981 – Sept 17, 1992
Tan Sri Dr Mazlan Ahmad	Nov 17, 1992 – Dec 12, 1995
Tan Sri Kamaruzzaman Shariff	Dec 13, 1995 – Dec 13, 2001
Datuk Mohamad Shaid Mohd Taufek	Dec 14, 2001 – Dec 13, 2004
Datuk Seri Ruslin Hasan	Dec 14, 2004 – Dec 13, 2006
Datuk Seri Ab Hakim Borhan	Dec 14, 2006 – Dec 13, 2008
Tan Sri Ahmad Fuad Ismail	Dec 14, 2008 – July 13, 2012
Tan Sri Ahmad Phesal Talib	July 18, 2012 – July 17, 2015
Tan Sri Mohd Amin Nordin Abdul Aziz	July 18, 2015 – Sept 30, 2018
Datuk Seri Nor Hisham Ahmad Dahlan	Oct 2, 2018 – Sept 30, 2020
Datuk Seri Mahadi Che Ngah	Oct 1, 2020 – March 31, 2023
Datuk Kamarulzaman Mat Salleh	April 17, 2023 – Present

Q: What accomplishments are you proud of during your time as mayor?

Mahadi: I made it a personal mission to conduct daily supervisory rounds, reflecting my deep commitment to Kuala Lumpur's progress.

My most cherished memory is seeing the city, particularly Wangsa Maju, become a globally recognised city in combating climate change.

This area's transformation into a Carbon-Neutral Growth Centre marked a significant achievement in green mobility, recycling and renewable energy.

I believe Wangsa Maju will serve as a model for future carbon-neutral initiatives.

Our strides in low-carbon initiatives have earned national



Nor Hisham (centre) seen here during a walkabout in Brickfields, says government agencies must prioritise their services to ratepayers.



Mahadi: Our road network evolved into an integrated system, connecting previously isolated areas like Wangsa Maju and Bukit Jalil.

ing the community, regardless of the political landscape.

I also believe in the value of experiencing a city on foot.

To this end, I advocated for pedestrian-only zones, exemplified by my initiative to close parts of Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, in front of landmarks like Sogo Kuala Lumpur and



Mohd Amin (right) is proud that during his tenure, 50,000 affordable housing units were built in Kuala Lumpur.



Nor Hisham: I advocated for pedestrian-only zones, including closing parts of Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman to vehicular traffic.

Masjid Jamek, to vehicular traffic.

Embracing pedestrian-friendly spaces is essential for the city's vibrancy.

Mohd Amin: During my tenure, the crowning achievement was the development of affordable housing in Kuala Lumpur, a

challenging feat given the reluctance of developers to construct three-bedroom units amid rising costs of materials like steel and cement.

Without subsidies or incentives, such projects are often unappealing to them.

However, we successfully built and completed over 50,000 units of affordable housing in the city.

Looking ahead, I foresee significant challenges for our younger population in home ownership over the next five to 10 years. Therefore, the focus should shift towards redeveloping older flats in the city.

Singapore encountered a similar situation years ago and managed to successfully redevelop many of their old housing projects to meet demand. It is time for us to follow suit.