

Ready to serve

Armed with a wealth of experience in local government administration, Kuala Lumpur's incoming mayor Datuk Ahmad Phesal Talib is confident he can rise to the challenge and help resolve problems affecting city folk. >2&3



At the ready

Datuk Ahmad Phesal Talib is set to take Kuala Lumpur to greater heights and wants to build a good relationship with the public as well as DBKL staff.
- The Star



Finding solutions: Deputy Federal Territories and Urban Wellbeing Minister Datuk M. Saravanan (second from left), Ahmad Phesal (fourth from left) and Batu MIC chairman Ramanathan Chinnu (third from left) looking at the local plan to solve an issue affecting residents.

Banking on experience

Engaging with the public, developing a smart trust and mutual respect between the public and civil servants and inspiring Kuala Lumpur City Hall staff to rise to the occasion is what the incoming mayor of Kuala Lumpur Datuk Ahmad Phesal Talib hopes to achieve.

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StarMetro: DBKL staff, especially the lower ranking, have been accused of being unfriendly and have been called "Little Napoleons". How are you going to change this perception among city residents and in turn urge them to change for the better?

Ahmad Phesal: My experience has taught me one thing – that public service is crucial and the positive impact of it can have a great impact on the community.

I also believe in the relationship of "smart trust" between civil servants and the public.

Personally, I go by the philosophy of "Respect us with dignity". This is my *mantra*, it is something the public want to see in the civil service and the civil servants must be willing to serve the public with an open heart.

I have learnt that even among dif-

ferent religions and cultures, society has taught mankind to do *dharma*, *seva* or *bakti*.

These values need to be inculcated into the DBKL system and drilled into the mindset of the staff. In this line they cannot avoid serving the public because we take money from the public for taxes – so the residents will have expectations which they are entitled to.

StarMetro: How are you going to inspire DBKL staff to change their mindset?

Ahmad Phesal: There should be more active listening and openness as well as sharing ideas. I am committed to listen and I promise to engage the public in every way possible. This is something we must do especially now that the demographic of KL-ites are different. People are more educated, and information is readily available to them at a click of a mouse.

StarMetro: How are you planning to engage with the public?

Ahmad Phesal: We will be establishing an Urban Wellbeing Council like the one in Putrajaya and this will function much like a Village Development Committee (JKK) in Kuala Lumpur.

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—DATUK AHMAD PHESAL TALIB

Each parliamentary constituency will have a committee which will see representation from the residents association, Rukun Tetangga, business community, management corporation, hawker council and City Hall officers. We plan to have public participation and engagement.

StarMetro: DBKL and many government agencies have been accused of this typically Malaysian *hangat hangat tahi ayam* (short-lived enthusiasm) attitude when launching new projects and services yet failing to live up to or inculcate a "follow through" or maintenance culture as well as enhance their delivery service and cut red tape. How are you going to change this culture?

Ahmad Phesal: We need to improve services by delegating work to the branch offices as well as instilling the smart trust culture I spoke about earlier. We have done well in Bukit Bintang via the LA21 project.

Having said that, it is also important to have a good staff relationship and as we need to take care of our staff as well. If they are not happy than we will have a big problem. A dissatisfied worker will retaliate silently and this will dampen how the organisation functions.

> SEE NEXT PAGE