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Seeking sustainable solutions

Kuala Lumpur residents are calling for holistic development, and the mayor is exploring technology to improve planning. Meanwhile, Putrajaya folk are pushing for infrastructure and service upgrades this year. >2&3

Rapid physical development in recent years has caused concerns among Kuala Lumpur residents. — Photos: File photos

YEAR STARTER 25

KL folk hope for improved living environment in 2025

Mayor promises to address concerns, start on initiatives this year

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KEEPING a lid on development projects, preserving green spaces and ensuring good governance top the wish list for Kuala Lumpur residents as the capital city marks the start of 2025.

On their behalf, representatives from associations and activists raised concerns about vital infrastructure such as public walkways and flood retention ponds making way for new developments.

They also expressed cautious optimism given their experience dealing with the authorities.

Concerns aplenty

Kuala Lumpur Residents Action for Sustainable Development Association (KLRA+SD) chairman Tan Booi Charn insisted that commercial developments must not outpace the provision of public facilities such as pedestrian walkways, drainage and sewerage.

She stressed that future developments must take into account the need for expansion to minimise disturbance.

"Allowance must also be made for open space and greenery while ensuring existing greenery is preserved," she said.

She added that Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) should widen the scope of traffic and social impact assessments to better gauge how a proposed development project would affect nearby residents.

Tan also expressed concern over the planned redevelopment exercise by DBKL aimed at revitalising certain areas and buildings in the city.

She said a guideline should be drafted to spell out and safeguard the interest of owners of properties surrounding such projects.

Preservation of green spaces is among top concerns in the capital city.

Save Kuala Lumpur chairman Datuk M. Ali pointed to reports of planned developments surrounding retention ponds in the city.

He said media statements had been made which promised that 52 ponds in Kuala Lumpur would remain untouched, yet nothing concrete has been done to safeguard these ponds.

"Promises should be translated into action, otherwise the local authority will lose public trust," he said.

Ali also urged DBKL to be bolder when carrying out enforcement and not compromise with rule-breakers.

He highlighted several properties in Jalan Maarof, Bangsar, that had been illegally renovated to add multiple storeys.

"We have complained, but so far no action has been taken.

"DBKL must act to ensure adherence to the city plans," he said in reference to the Kuala Lumpur structure and local plans.

Community activist Yee Poh Ping called on DBKL to reform regulations and empower its Commissioner of Buildings (COB) to take a more active role in the management of strata communities.

He said the COB currently had limited jurisdiction to solve problems facing low and medium strata residences.

He added that DBKL should mobilise staff at its branch offices to step up inspection in their respective localities.

"They must take initiative and not rely solely on public complaints," he stressed.

Actions in 2025

Speaking to *StarMetro*, Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Maimunah Mohd Sharif said she has a handful of plans lined up to address those concerns.

Among them is speeding up the gazettement of Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2040 (KLLP2040), initially slated to be finalised in May 2025.

"We are still using the outdated KLLP2020. The sooner we get an updated version, the better.

"I have asked the Prime Minister if we can get KLLP2040 gazetted by March and he has agreed," she said, adding that the public hearing sessions had concluded.

Tan: Developments should not outpace provisions for public facilities.

Ali says DBKL must translate its promises into tangible action.

Draft KLLP2040 drew some 38,000 objections, of which 4,000 were deemed reasonable, said Maimunah.

The plan is a blueprint outlining development strategies, zoning regulations and land use in Kuala Lumpur, among others.

KLLP2040 aside, the mayor said DBKL was set to embark on a number of initiatives this year.

Among them are giving emphasis to digital data integration, investment in green initiatives and enhanced cooperation with news outlets.

Maimunah said several major cities in the world already had technology enabling its planners to obtain visuals of their future layout.

She said DBKL too was working towards consolidating its data on traffic and development projects – both existing and upcoming ones – to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the capital.

"We already have traffic data that is managed by the Kuala Lumpur Command and Control Centre.

"Integrating it with the information on development projects will allow us to visualise what the capital will look like in the future, say in 50 to 100 years.

"This will enable us to make better decisions regarding city planning and management," she added.

Another initiative in the pipeline is the construction of green connectors, which are pedestrian walkways lined with greenery, to link key locations such as landmarks and public transport stations.

It will be undertaken by DBKL with Think City, a Khazanah Nasional Bhd subsidiary.

It involves high traffic areas such as Bukit Nanas and Dataran Merdeka, with the aim of improving walkability and accessibility.

Maimunah said she was spurred to act after getting feedback from various stakeholders, including politicians and the media.

"Among them was Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who informed me that Jakarta in Indonesia seems greener than Kuala Lumpur.

"There have also been calls in the media to improve walkability," she said.

Maimunah added that the green connectors were a two-pronged strategy to address both concerns.

But topmost on the mayor's priority list were media engagement and public relations, which she stressed were crucial for DBKL's image.

"It does not matter what good we do, if we don't communicate it to the public, they will not be aware.

"One negative post going viral on social media is all it takes to undo the positives we have done," she said, adding that DBKL would also strengthen its complaint management platform ADU@KL.

When tabling DBKL's 2025 budget last December, Maimunah said City Hall was expected to collect RM2.445bil in revenue this year, marking a 5.84% increase from RM2.31bil in 2024.

Some RM2.835bil was allocated for management and development purposes, which was a RM175mil (6.57%) increase compared to the preceding year's budget.

Kampung Bohol retention pond has become a centre of controversy after news broke out about a planned development around it.

Yee wants DBKL staff at branch offices to be more proactive in addressing people's grievances.

Maimunah has outlined initiatives to improve living conditions in the capital this year.

A project is underway to link key landmarks with public transport stations in Kuala Lumpur.