Healthy cityscapes

To mark Federal Territories Day, Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa shares plans on sustainability, heritage revival and lively celebrations, including a promise of an urban park in Bandar Malaysia for Kuala Lumpur residents. >2&3

Busy year ahead: Dr Zaliha Mustafa, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories), says there are over 300 Asean-related events and activities scheduled throughout 2025, with around 180 taking place in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. — YAP CHEE HONG/The Star

Breathing new life into Kuala Lumpur landscape

Capital puts best foot forward as it marks 51 years of being a federal territory, prepares to welcome Asean delegates

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

THIS year is set to be transformative for Kuala Lumpur as the capital celebrates the 51st anniversary of the Federal Territories (FT).

Beyond the many events and festivities lined up to celebrate FT Day, the city, which was proclaimed a federal territory on this day in 1974, is poised to elevate its status in terms of sustainability, heritage preservation and regional influence.

As Malaysia steps into the spotlight with the Asean chairmanship, Kuala Lumpur is gearing up to restore historic landmarks and reinvigorate the River of Life (RoL) project, breathing new life into its urban landscape.

In an exclusive interview with *StarMetro*, Dr Zaliha Mustafa, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department responsible for Federal Territories, shares her vision for Kuala Lumpur, aimed at transforming it into a dynamic and inclusive hub that reflects its rich cultural tapestry and forward-thinking spirit.

She also touches on events for FT Day in the other federal territories of Putrajaya and Labuan.

Celebrating the territories

City residents can look forward to carnivals, fun runs and other events throughout this month as part of the FT Day celebrations.

However, with Malaysia set to host various Asean meetings and summits, many more activities are lined up throughout the year, transforming Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya into a garden city of lights.

"For FT Day events, we have 60 programmes planned for the month," Dr Zaliha said (*see graphic titled "FT Day line-up of events"*).

"There are over 300 Asean-related events and activities scheduled throughout the year, with about 180 taking place in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya."

Events promoting healthy living and community engagement are also scheduled for the other territories.

In Putrajaya, these include a half marathon, night marathon, neighbourhood clean-up and health-themed carnivals, alongside a bird race and photography competition.

As for Labuan, she said there were plans for an explorace open day, a fishing competition and *sukaneka* (community sport event) aimed at fostering unity among residents.

Dr Zaliha also hopes to see more flora-focused events in both territories, encouraging families to spend time outdoors and strengthen community ties.

"As a medical doctor, I truly believe that a healthy population leads to a healthy city," she said, adding that her push for these initiatives was to inspire healthier lifestyles in both regions.

But there will be special emphasis on Kuala Lumpur.

"The programmes we have lined up will highlight the city's vibrant spirit, rich history and pivotal role as a cultural and economic hub in the region.

"These celebrations aim to unite residents and visitors in honouring the city's legacy while looking towards its future.

"While the Foreign Ministry is secretariat for the Asean Summit, we are part of the main committee and have a crucial role to play, namely in logistics.

"Kuala Lumpur is the gateway to the country; all experiences, whether good or bad, start here.

"We want to make every experience as pleasant and memorable as possible.

"With about 180 programmes planned for this year, we must ensure the city's infrastructure, protocol roads, and lighting are all in excellent working order."

Dr Zaliha said part of the preparations involved beautifying the city, including landscaping areas like roundabouts with plants and colourful flowers.

"A significant number of events will take place at locations such as KLCC, Bukit Bintang and tourist attractions like the Saloma Link.

"Therefore, we need to ensure the surrounding infrastructure such as roads are free of potholes, streetlights are functional and the landscaping is refreshed.

"I have also requested that the hibiscus, our national flower, take centre stage, with flowering shrubs chosen for their vibrant colours to enhance the area."

She said KL city was also set to glow with key buildings illuminated in a myriad of colours.

"For this, we have identified iconic landmarks such as KL Tower, PETRONAS Twin Towers and Menara MAIWP in Kampung Baru, as well as hotels and other private establishments that are interested in collaborating with us. We encourage the private sector to partner with us, with costs offset through incentives," she added.

Additionally, Dr Zaliha revealed plans to collaborate with tourist groups to develop programmes that showcased Kuala Lumpur's hidden gems and its rich culinary heritage.

Photo op for visitors at the ROL project near Masjid Jamek. Beautification along the 10.7km ROL stretch along the Klang and Gombak rivers is 95.6% complete. — Photos: IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star

FT Day line-up of events

Date	Event	Venue
Feb 1	FT Day 2025 Run & Putrajaya Night Half Marathon	Jambatan Putra, Putrajaya
Feb 1-2	FT Day Community Garden Open Day	Laman Dapur & Kelulut Taman Botani, Putrajaya
Feb 2	KL Car-free Day (FT Day 2025 edition)	Dataran DBKL, Kuala Lumpur
Feb 2	Bersih-Kal	Dataran DBKL, Kuala Lumpur
Feb 6-9	FT Day Carnival & Putrajaya Open Day	Dataran Putrajaya & Kompleks PPj
Feb 6-9	E-Sports championship	Auditorium Tun Azizan Zainul Abidin, Precinct 3, Putrajaya
Feb 8	FT gotong-royong & FT Bloom	Various locations, Putrajaya and Labuan
Feb 8-9	Jualan Rahmah	Dataran Putrajaya, Putrajaya
Feb 9	Langkah Ceria Putrajaya	Dataran Putrajaya, Putrajaya
Feb 15	Mega Golong-Royong Kampung Baru	Masjid Jamek Kampung Baru, Kuala Lumpur
Feb 15	Sports Carnival 2025	Kompleks Futsal Mokhtar Dahari, Precinct 18, Putrajaya
Feb 15	Jualan Rahmah	Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur
Feb 15	Chinese New Year Prosperity Walk	Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur
Feb 15-16	'Our FT' Carnival	Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur
Feb 16	FT Day 2025 Run & KL Night Half Marathon	Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur
Feb 21-23	Putrajaya Bird Race & Photography 2025	Taman Botani Putrajaya
Feb 26	Blood donation drive	Menara DBKL 3, Kuala Lumpur

**Events are subject to change*
Source: Federal Territories Department
The Star graphics

Landscaping along tree-lined Jalan Parlimen has been spruced up. KL Tower in the background is one of several buildings set to be illuminated in a myriad of colours for FT Day.

Dr Zaliha is looking forward to working with local communities where ROL assets are located.

Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad will undergo restoration works as part of the KLCCD masterplan.

Rejuvenating heritage assets

High on her list of priorities is the revitalisation of Kuala Lumpur's heritage assets, which she insists must be preserved for future generations.

"We have an incredible gift in our historic buildings, but they have been left neglected.

"Through the Kuala Lumpur Creative and Cultural District (KLCCD) masterplan, we are now bringing these historic gems back to life," said Dr Zaliha.

"I hold regular meetings with Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan to monitor the progress of these restoration efforts.

"The Prime Minister is deeply concerned about the condition of these structures, and their restoration is one of our key priorities," she added.

"Apart from the initial RM20mil allocated under Budget 2025, the government allocated an additional RM600mil.

"This funding will be directed towards restoring Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad and Carcosa Seri Negara, both designated National Heritage sites under National Heritage Act 2005."

Sovereign wealth fund Khazanah Nasional, through its subsidiary Think City, is managing the restoration project, which includes 10 flagship initiatives (*see graphic titled "KLCCD Flagship Projects"*).

"These projects represent our commitment to revitalising Kuala Lumpur through transformative developments," she said.

"From the heritage-rich Dataran Merdeka to modern landmarks like Merdeka 118, as well as eco-friendly projects such as the Green Connection Network, these initiatives aim to enhance public spaces, preserve our history and promote sustainability.

"While we are on track to deliver most of these projects, a few like Tun Abdul Razak Memorial require additional attention to address challenges and ensure timely completion."

Addressing river issues

Another key initiative Dr Zaliha is focusing on is the billion-ringgit River of Life (ROL)project and its ageing infrastructure.

"There are three components to the River of Life: beautification, river cleansing and the developments surrounding the project sites.

"The river cleansing aspect is beyond our control as it falls under the purview of Petra (the Energy Transition and Water Transformation Ministry) and its agencies, such as Drainage and Irrigation Department.

"However, if you look at the entire 10.7km ROL stretch along the Klang and Gombak rivers, the beautification component is 95.6% complete.

"The transformation is evident, and we've received multiple awards for our riverfront projects.

"That said, we are aware that some of these assets are deteriorating due to neglect. We aim to address this issue.

"I've heard that nearby communities are eager to volunteer and manage these assets.

"It's a fantastic idea to let them take on this responsibility."

Dr Zaliha also expressed interest in engaging with local communities, such as those in Brickfields where ROL assets are located.

"We will work with these communities and possibly allocate some funding for their efforts.

"Community engagement is critical in building relationships and ensuring long-term care for these assets."

Of the RM4.36bil allocated to ROL, RM3.3bil was river cleaning and RM1.06bil for river beautification.

A total of RM3.915bil has been spent so far.

Kuala Lumpur Creative and Cultural District (KLCCD) Flagship Projects

Project	Details	Timeline
Dataran Merdeka Heritage area	▸ Reactivate public spaces ▸ Create a visual identity guideline	2026
Carcosa Seri Negara	▸ Opening of Seri Negara for Visit Malaysia 2026 ▸ Transform Seri Negara into a national gallery ▸ Carcosa to be turned into hotel fitting with the environment	2023 - 2027
Merdeka 118	▸ Placemaking strategies ▸ Upgrade PA Seri Sarawak recreational park	2023 - 2024
Masjid Jamek Enclave	▸ Upgrade of LRT Masjid Jamek station and directional signs ▸ Upgrade of 'narrative presentations' of local history	2023 - 2026
Commercial Quadrant	▸ Rejuvenation and upgrading of public spaces, pedestrian walkways & shoplots	2023 - 2025
Tun Abdul Razak Memorial (Taman Tugu)	▸ Details to be determined	NA
Green Linear Corridor	▸ Pilot project involving two pocket parks using nature-based solutions	2023 - 2025
Kuala Lumpur Railway Station	▸ Establishing conservation management plan ▸ Maintenance, conservation and development of train station	NA
Fashion & Textile	▸ Area rejuvenation ▸ Upgrading of storytelling and wayfinding	Five years

**Details are subject to change*
Source: Federal Territories Department
The Star graphics