

KL's smart city push highlights need for national-level AI integration

While the deployment of smart city tools has grown, data fragmentation and siloed efforts are undermining national efficiency and increasing costs, says Gobind

by GLORIA HARRY BEATTY

KUALA Lumpur's (KL) ambitions to become a model smart city are accelerating — but city and federal officials now face the challenge of ensuring fragmented digital infrastructure is integrated across agencies and states to realise the full potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in urban governance.

Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo said while the deployment of smart city tools has grown, data fragmentation and siloed efforts are undermining national efficiency and increasing costs.

"There are different ministries that are looking at different initiatives, which is good, but how do we make sure that the existing data can be integrated?"

"We do not want a situation where you move ahead and you find that new technology has developed, but we are not ready to use it," he said during a recent visit to the Kuala Lumpur Command and Control Centre (KLCCC).

Gobind stressed that the next leap forward for Malaysia's digital transformation would depend on harmonising data infrastructure through compute power, national cloud storage, and cross-agency coordination.

"Before you can share, you need to make sure it is digitised and properly stored. You are looking at cloud storage and, of course, you must have the compute power so that you can actually use this data to create the solutions that you need," he added.

His remarks followed a walkthrough of the KLCCC, where officials from the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) showcased AI-driven tools currently deployed in the capital — including real-time traffic analytics, a digital twin of the city, and flood mitigation systems.

KL Mayor Datuk Seri Maimunah Mohd Sharif said DBKL had already begun developing the urban digital twin concept since late last year.

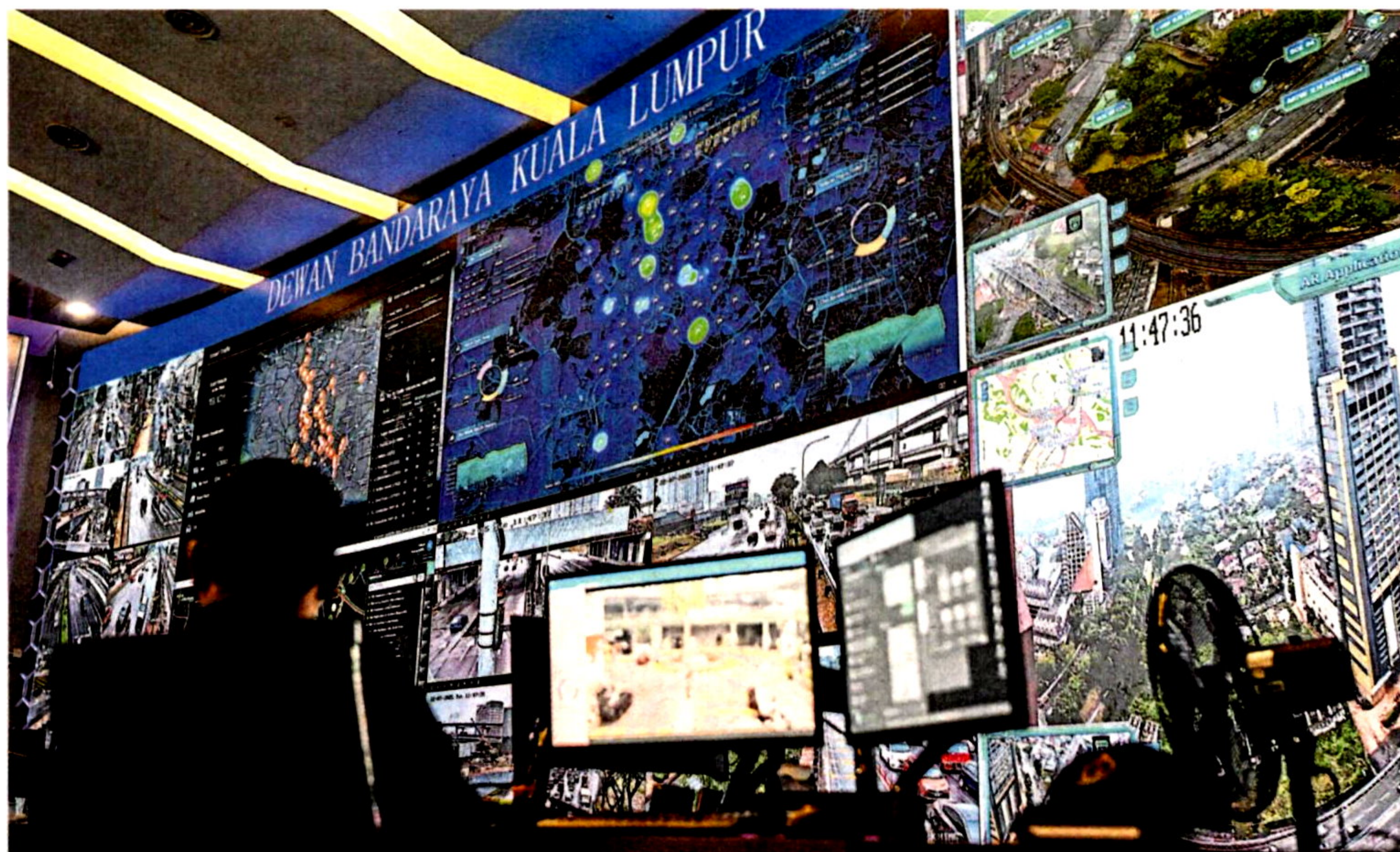
She said she had given her team a timeline to prepare by August, with the goal of showcasing their progress by September.

"I am truly honoured and would also like to congratulate the minister and the federal government for successfully bringing the Smart City Expo to Malaysia. Let us take this opportunity to learn together and showcase what we have to the country," she said.

The virtual city model allows DBKL to simulate future development scenarios and monitor urban capacity more dynamically.

Maimunah said the system can model the CO2 footprint of new developments, traffic impact and even oxygen-balancing green space, giving city planners evidence-based tools to support the local plan up to 2040.

"For example, if you look into the mate-



Pics source : Media Mulia

Operations at the KLCCC. Currently, the KLCCC has already enabled DBKL to reduce flood monitoring hotspots from 35 to less than 10



Gobind (left) discussing with Maimunah during the walkthrough of the KLCCC, where officials from DBKL showcased AI-driven tools currently deployed in the capital

rial used to construct the building, you can calculate the CO2 emission being emitted and look for the plants which produce oxygen and balance out this CO2 emission," she said.

However, while the capital is advancing rapidly, Gobind indicated that true efficiency and long-term cost savings would only come if Malaysia builds a national-level digital twin with data from all states and agencies.

"This is where the Digital Ministry comes in. We bring together the assets that we have, leverage on the strength that it provides us,

and ultimately decide how we are going to move forward, so that we can reduce costs.

"We can ensure that we optimise on what we already have. There is no need for us to recreate the wheel," he said.

Maimunah said integration between cities, states, and the federal government would allow Malaysia to reduce duplication and make better use of its resources.

"This can also reduce infrastructure spending and further enhance data sharing at the city, municipal and national levels."

Currently, the KLCCC has already enabled

DBKL to reduce flood monitoring hotspots from 35 to less than 10, without the need of officers to physically check the rainwater levels at each location.

"We link the system to the Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID). We can also share the data with Alam Flora Sdn Bhd," she said.

Maimunah explained that the system allows authorities to monitor rising river levels remotely, enabling quicker clean-up or on-site inspections when needed — ultimately reducing operational costs and improving DBKL's overall efficiency.

In traffic management, sensors in street lighting and traffic lights allow DBKL and enforcement agencies to plan detours and adjust signal flow — especially during major events.

Gobind's visit also served as a lead-up to the Smart City Expo Kuala Lumpur 2025 (SCEKL 2025), which will be co-hosted by the Malaysia Digital Economy Corp (MDEC) and Digital Nasional Bhd (DNB), both agencies under the Digital Ministry.

He pointed out that different ministries are currently pursuing their own initiatives, which could benefit from greater integration.

"If we can build our strength and prepare for the future, we can have a secure system which people trust, then we can head in the right direction towards Malaysia Digital 2030," he said.

SCEKL 2025 is scheduled to take place from Sept 17-19, 2025, at the KL Convention Centre, and is an extension of the globally renowned Smart City Expo World Congress (SCEWC), the world's largest event dedicated to urban innovation.