

Kuala Lumpur to take centre stage in ASEAN sustainable city agenda

ZAHID IZZANI/THE EDGE

Kuala Lumpur will host three major ASEAN urban development events in August, marking a significant milestone in its journey towards becoming a model sustainable city for the region.

For the first time, the city will concurrently host the ASEAN Sustainable Urbanisation Forum (ASUF), ASEAN Governors and Mayors Forum (AGMF) and the Meeting of Governors and Mayors of ASEAN Capitals (MGMAC).

Held from Aug 10 to 15 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, the forums come under the theme "ASEAN Future Cities and Regions: Inclusivity and Sustainability".

Going beyond the high-level discussions, Kuala Lumpur Mayor Dato' Seri TPr. (Dr.) Maimunah Mohd Sharif says the week-long programme is designed to immerse delegates in how the city is translating global ambitions into grounded action through a host of events, including site visits, public dialogues and sustainability workshops. "I want them to remember Kuala Lumpur — not just for the meetings, but also how we translate plans into action. Let this city be the benchmark," she adds.

The week-long programme in August will feature a dynamic mix of events designed to inspire, connect and catalyse action across the ASEAN region. Among the key highlights is the Urban Expo, which will showcase smart, sustainable and inclusive urban solutions from ASEAN cities, ranging from climate action technologies to digital innovation and green infrastructure.

Complementing this is the Women-Led Cities dialogue, a platform focused on empowering women in urban leadership and governance, with additional sessions dedicated to the youth, disability inclusion and affordable housing.

The KL COP Town Hall and KL City Stage will serve as open forums for stakeholders to discuss climate resilience, digital transformation and the future of ASEAN's urban landscape.

"We expect keynote and panel participants across ASEAN cities and international organisations featuring prominent city leaders, urban innovators, UN-Habitat and UCLG-ASPAC representatives, and technical experts in climate resilience, women-led urban development, smart city solutions and inclusive planning," says Maimunah.

The majority of the workshops, dialogues and Town Hall sessions are open to all registered participants, including city officials, policymakers, private sector leaders, civil society representatives, community leaders, non-governmental organisations, researchers, social enterprises and volunteers.

She adds that admission is free of charge, but prior online registration is required.



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Mohd Sharif

A GROUND-LEVEL VIEW OF KL'S URBAN STRATEGY

Delegates will be taken on technical site visits to key locations that embody Kuala Lumpur's planning philosophy.

"We want them to see our city not just through presentations, but on the ground — and maybe, even give feedback that helps us do better," says Maimunah.

One of the key sites is Merdeka 118 — a shining example of integrated urban redevelopment, balancing iconic architecture with community access, environmental performance and the revitalisation of the surrounding heritage areas.

Besides being the tallest building in Southeast Asia, the monument is a global symbol of green engineering and inclusive design, certified with international sustainability rating systems such as LEED, and includes public amenities, community spaces and efficient mobility access.

Delegates will also visit Taman Tasik Titiwangsa — part of the River of Life (ROL) project — which showcases Kuala Lumpur's vision of becoming a "city in the park". It emphasises harmonising nature and the urban landscape to create spaces that are both climate-resilient and community-friendly.

To demonstrate the walkability of the city, delegates will be taken through the five precincts of the Warisan KL initiative, aimed at revitalising the heart of Kuala Lumpur into a vibrant and creative hub.

Moreover, they will be brought to the sites that will be developed under the Green Connectors initiative — an ambitious project that aims to link existing parks in the city.

CONNECTING THE CITY'S GREEN POCKETS

The Green Connectors project aims to address the city's growing need for accessible green spaces, sustainable

mobility and climate adaptation by establishing a continuous network of green corridors that link parks, river reserves, urban forests and public open spaces across the city.

"While we do have green spaces such as the Perdana Botanical Garden, Taman Tasik Titiwangsa, Lanai Seni and small pocket parks throughout the city, we don't have a park on the level of New York's Central Park or London's Hyde Park. What we can do is connect these green spaces into one seamless network. This is what we want to do with the Green Connectors project," says Maimunah.

Structured around six planning zones, including Menjalara-Sentul, Wangsa Maju Maluri and Bukit Jalil-Seputeh, the initiative involves upgrading pedestrian and cycling pathways with smart, energy-efficient features such as solar lighting, CCTV, public WiFi and shaded rest stops.

These enhancements are not only designed for comfort and safety but also to support biodiversity through targeted landscaping and urban greening.

The Green Connectors project will be implemented in three phases over the next decade: Quick Wins (one to two years), Medium Term (up to five years) and Long Term (up to 10 years). It includes enhancements to 26 major roads, upgrades to 44 pocket parks (25 existing and 19 new), the rebranding of 17 public parks, beautification of 14 river reserves and improvements to six retention ponds.

All of this contributes to the city's long-term goal of building 256km of connected green infrastructure as outlined in the Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2040 (PTKL 2040). The initiative is grounded in a 4P approach — Public, Private and People Partnerships — ensuring that the planning and implementation process is participatory,

community-driven and scalable.

Through this effort, Kuala Lumpur aims to enhance ecological connectivity and urban walkability while setting a regional benchmark for green infrastructure and people-first city design.

BUILDING THE REGIONAL BENCHMARK FOR URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Kuala Lumpur's urban strategy is closely aligned with the ASEAN 2045 Shared Vision and New Urban Agenda, especially in how it prioritises sustainability, inclusivity, innovation and regional cooperation.

"The ASEAN 2045 Shared Vision calls for a united, resilient and future-ready ASEAN, and we see Kuala Lumpur's role as a leading example of how a capital city can translate and localise that ambition into real outcomes on the ground," says Maimunah.

She adds that this is in line with the UN-Habitat New Strategic Plan, which identifies thematic priorities such as sustainable cities, smart mobility systems, inclusive housing policies, circular economy and nature-based solutions — many of which have been embedded into the Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2040.

By the end of this event, Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) hopes to inspire more cities to implement and localise the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in line with global sustainability goals.

"Looking ahead, as the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur, I truly hope the next generation will inherit a Kuala Lumpur that is not only greener and smarter, but also more compassionate — a city where technology serves people, where no community is left behind and where quality of life goes hand in hand with environmental stewardship," says Maimunah.