



Feb 1 will mark a significant occasion for Kuala Lumpur as the city celebrates its 50th anniversary. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star

Businesses anticipate better days ahead as KL turns 50

By SHALINI RAVINDRAN
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IT MAY be a gloomy start to the year after the December floods and the Covid-19 Omicron variant made headway in some parts of the world, but businesses in Kuala Lumpur are holding on to hope to inject life back into the city.

Popular food streets such as Petaling Street, Jalan Alor and Masjid India are raring to go in the hopes that businesses will pick up after a challenging two years of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Jalan Alor Hawkers Association secretary Simon Ang said plans were in the pipeline to hold several programmes to help revive businesses in the area.

"We are forming a network with other groups in Bukit Bintang and Petaling Street to come up with events and activities that will bring people back to these places.

"It has been a challenging 2021, but we hope 2022 will be better," he said, adding that holding the proposed programmes was dependent on the Covid-19 situation and relevant approvals from the National Security Council (NSC) as well as Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL).

Masjid India Business Association (Miba) president Datuk Ameer Ali Mydin is hoping that



Jalan Alor, a popular food destination in Kuala Lumpur, is one the many areas that was severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. — MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI/The Star

DBKL and other local agencies would work hand in hand with Masjid India businesses to revitalise the area.

"We need to drive more domestic tourism if we are to survive. We were previously dependent on mostly foreign tourists.

"There has to be strategic planning that is more domestically-driven, as footfall in this area is only 30% to 40% of what it had been previously.

"While we are slightly optimistic that this coming year will be better, we hope the situation will

improve significantly."

He added that some suggestions included beautifying Masjid India, holding events and activities as well as introducing shopping vouchers to increase foot traffic.

This year will also mark a significant milestone for Kuala Lumpur as it celebrates its 50th anniversary on Feb 1.

To mark the occasion, 50 programmes and activities have been lined up for city residents, hosted by Federal Territories Ministry and DBKL.

It was previously reported that



An archway signalling that it is 2022 greeting motorists at Jalan Raja Laut in Kuala Lumpur. — IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star

among the programmes to be held are Kuala Lumpur Writing Competition, Kuala Lumpur Drum (Gendang) and Dance Festival, Karnival Ohhh Kuala Lumpur, Festival Nostalgia Kuala Lumpur-KL Dulu and Jon Makan Festival.

The ministry is also planning to hold a virtual Citizen's Day (*Hari Rakyat*) interaction programme with Federal Territories folks in an effort to resolve problems.

This is in line with the Malaysian Family concept.

Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim previ-

ously said that he wanted Kuala Lumpur to reclaim its place as South-East Asia's top shopping destination.

He said efforts to revive Kuala Lumpur as a top shopping destination would be looked into, including holding discussions with private and government retail sectors on offering good bargains to tourists.

To commemorate Kuala Lumpur's golden jubilee, Shahidan has urged private building owners to beautify their properties with decorative lights.



Putrajaya Bridge Night Ride returns in 2022. Royal Floria Putrajaya makes a comeback.



Putrajaya Inter Park Ride is in September.



Dragon boat races will be fun to watch.

Showcasing Putrajaya's attractions through calendar of events

By VIJENTHI NAIR
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THERE are a whole lot of exciting events lined up in the country's administrative capital this year as we step into 2022.

Putrajaya Corporation (PjC) Corporate Communications director Norzita Abdul Razak said PjC was planning to hold its annual events and festivals, which the city was known for, as these had attracted many local and international tourists.

"Many events could not be held in the last two years due to the Covid-19 restrictions. So now that the nation is in the National Recovery Plan phase, we hope to organise our annual events and more, as planned," she said.

PjC's calendar of events kicks

off with a green affair at Taman Warisan Pertanian Fair from Jan 28 to 30.

The variety of trees and plants, in the 14ha park, as well as their produce will be showcased to visitors at the fair.

With the exhibits concentrated in one area, there is no need for visitors to explore the length of the park.

Putrajaya will also have a month-long celebration and a line-up of activities in conjunction with Federal Territories Day on Feb 1.

An Open Day has been planned for March 1 so people can get to know the government agencies better but the much-anticipated Putrajaya Bridge Night Ride, scheduled for March 11 and 12, is the highlight of the month.

This annual night cycling event,

which is an anticipated event by cyclists, was cancelled in the last two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

PjC will resume its agenda on June 16 with a two-day Cyclefest — a carnival to promote cycling as a sport and recreational activity.

The city will then turn its attention to greening activities once again.

The National Tree Climbing Challenge, on July 16 to 17, provides arborists in the region a competitive and educational opportunity to demonstrate and exchange new tree climbing techniques, as well as share safe work practices.

Also making a comeback in 2022 is the popular Royal Floria Putrajaya.

The annual flower and garden festival, scheduled for August, was last held in 2019.

The Putrajaya Water Sports Festival, too, has been organised for August.

If all goes well, visitors can expect to see dragon boat races, rowing races and canoe sprints, among others from Aug 6 to 7.

A competitive orienteering event has been planned at Taman Warisan Pertanian on Aug 28 and 29.

Orienteering participants will have to find their way through the park with the aid of a compass and map to get to the finishing point.

The 38th International Board on Books For Young People (IBBY) Congress from Sept 5 to 8

and the Heritage and Cultural Festival, from Sept 3 to 10, are happening alongside each other.

The Putrajaya Inter Park Ride, another fun cycling event, returns on Sept 17 to 18 after a few years' absence.

Thrill seekers are not left out as they can show off their skills and stunts on skateboard and mountain bikes at the PCP Adrenaline Festival on Oct 15 to 16.

Nature lovers and bird watchers will be delighted to hear that the Putrajaya Bird Race is slated for Nov 19 to 20.

To round up their 2022 calendar of events, PjC is planning the Putrajaya Lights and Motion Festival on Dec 30 that stretches right until Jan 1, 2023.

DID: Retention ponds not sold

Those on govt land will not be compromised for development, says dept

By BAVANI M
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THE Kuala Lumpur Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) has denied that it sold flood retention ponds situated on government land.

Its deputy director Ratna Rajah Sivapiragasam said even if the land where the retention ponds were situated in had been sold, the ponds themselves remained under the purview of the department.

He was commenting on the allegations made by several MPs who claimed that six flood retention ponds in the city had been approved for development.

Ratna said the MPs should have sought clarification with the department first before making the allegations.

Last week, Segambut MP Hannah Yeoh, citing the Auditor-General's Report 2019 Series 2, had called on the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to investigate the alienation of six flood retention ponds for development between October 2015 and September 2020.

On Saturday, several KL MPs had also lodged police reports to investigate possible abuse of power over the sale of the ponds.

The six retention ponds in question are Kolam Batu, Kolam Nanyang, Kolam Delima, Kolam Taman Wahyu, Kolam Batu 4 1/2 and Kolam Taman Desa.

DID director-general Datuk Dr Md Nasir Md Noh, when contacted, said that land alienation did not mean that the retention ponds need to be surrendered.

"The ponds, and the area surrounding, will be upgraded with walking paths and has to be surrendered back to the government after the project is completed.

"If we sell the ponds then the entire Kuala Lumpur will be flooded," he said.

Ratna explained that the land where the six ponds sit have been approved for transfer of ownership by the Department of Director



Flood retention ponds are built on former mining ponds to divert water during floods. — YAP CHEE HONG/The Star

(Inset) Ratna says there are 15 flood retention ponds in Kuala Lumpur.

General of Lands and Mines Federal Territories (PPTGWP) to four companies for residential and mixed development.

"While the land has been sold, the developers will not be allowed to touch the ponds or compromise its storage capacity," he told *StarMetro*.

He elaborated that the ponds had to be functional and properly maintained, and that the DID will not allow any tampering that may compromise the pond's storage facility.

"They (developer) will have to upgrade the area and maintain the land surrounding the ponds.

"We built flood mitigation ponds to counter floods, and these pieces of land are located on former mining ponds. Once it is functional, we will gazette it, but this takes time.

"But there are people who are eyeing this land for development and they will approach the government.

"This is when the matter goes to the Federal Territory Land Executive Committee which is chaired by the Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Zuki

Ali," he said.

Ratna added that if the committee did not receive any objection to the development proposal, the government and PPTGWP will proceed with the alienation process.

He said DID and Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) would object if they felt that the development would compromise the retention pond's storage capacity.

"The Taman Desa Flood retention pond was alienated to one company and the DID and DBKL put in a condition for the developer to guarantee that by developing the land, they must prove that it will not reduce the capacity of the pond.

"They (company) could not guarantee it and the Chief Secretary cancelled the alienation process.

"But the government had to pay back the hefty premiums to the company," he said.

Ratna said this took place on Aug 27, 2020, after the 2019 AG's report was published, which was why it was not in the report.

"While ideally we would all like to see the land with the retention ponds not developed at all, we have

to look at the overall economic factor and the need to build affordable homes," he said.

Overall, Ratna added that Kuala Lumpur was the least affected by the Dec 18 weekend flood as all the flood retention ponds were fully functional and operating at optimum level.

There are 15 flood retention ponds in Kuala Lumpur that were built to counter floods.

He said DID's Kuala Lumpur Flood Mitigation (KLFM) plan, which is a control-at-source approach whereby excess water is diverted to flood mitigation ponds, did its job.

The stored water in the ponds is then gradually released back into the rivers when the situation improves. This prevents excess water from flowing into the city during a downpour which can lead to floods.

"Our flood mitigation system had a certain protection level and it worked well, however the evacuation and rescue efforts for people could have been better coordinated," he added.