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Let's all help make KL a world-class city

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MALAYSIANS residing in Kuala Lumpur celebrated the 29th anniversary of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur last week.

Mayor Datuk Mohamad Shaid Mohd Taufek appealed to all residents and stakeholders to work with City Hall to help build the city into a garden city of lights with a soul, as envisaged by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

It is important to reflect on our past achievements, look at present issues, contribute ideas and work together with City Hall to address these issues.

I recall those days as a youthful wakil rakyat in 1969 representing Bukit Nanas. There were numerous problems in KL such as illegal squatters, unlicensed hawkers, poor infrastructure and urban poverty.

We are now in 2003. The city has come a long way from an area of 0.647 sq km in 1895 to an area of 243.65 sq km with a population of 1.4 million and still growing.

From a township of squatter settlements, unlicensed street hawkers and poor infrastructure in 1969, KL has become an organised metropolis with modern amenities.

Despite the achievements, the city is by no means perfect. There is a need to balance physical development with the development of a person's character, mindset and attitude.

The mayor's vision is to make KL an ultra-modern garden city of lights, safe and secure and free from all social vices and problems.

He has been concerned about the poor and depressed sectors of Kuala Lumpur, poverty eradication and providing satisfactory housing and recreation for the poor.

It is appropriate to focus on the urban poor as Kuala Lumpur's poverty rate increased from 0.5 per cent in 1995 to 2.3 per cent in 1999. Programmes must be drawn up for them as well as the less-developed areas of the city.

Providing more affordable public housing and self-employment opportunities such as hawking and petty trading are among the many approaches to address urban poverty.

As the city continues to grow, it will put huge pressure on the administrators to plan and manage it.

It is a declared goal of City Hall to make Kuala Lumpur "A World-Class City". A city is considered "world-class" if it can provide the highest quality living, working and business environment benchmarked against the best in the world.

To be a world-class city, KL must facilitate economic growth, social development and technological innovation.

It must be safe, secure, healthy, caring, sustainable and environmentally friendly, able to involve all stakeholders in decision-making.

Making KL a world-class city also necessitates a high level of civic-consciousness among its people who take pride in the cleanliness and beauty of their city.