

Do we need an FT Ministry?

MAI AY MAU 17/04/09 MS4

THIS question has been raised time and time again by various quarters, and some have even called for the Ministry to be scrapped.

With only three agencies under its wing, the Federal Territories (FT) Ministry acts as "big brother" to Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan, and the Ministry is tasked with formulating policies for the daily running of these three territories.

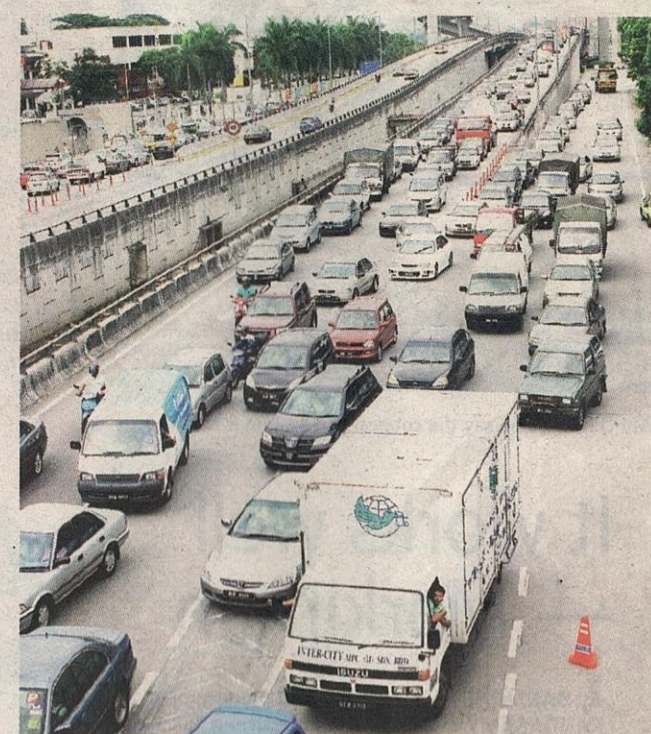
Though its role is to ensure that places such as Kuala Lumpur achieve their ambition of becoming world class cities, the power of this Ministry is next to zero when it comes to making decisions about serious unresolved issues like poor public transportation, traffic congestion and floods.

With a workforce of over 100 people, the Ministry is a young one that was revived in 2004 by former Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

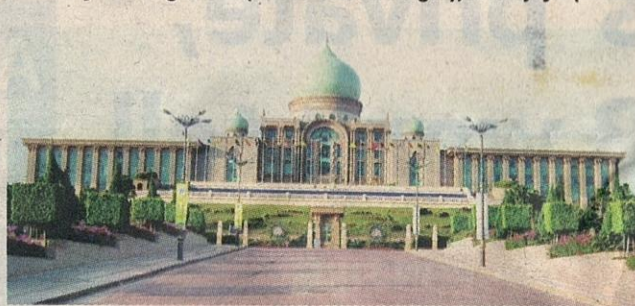
It is mainly in charge of overseeing legislation, planning and carrying out human and physical development in line with Malaysian culture and qualities — this is what the Ministry's official website says, at least.

In the case of Kuala Lumpur, however, the functions of the Minister significantly duplicate those of the office of the Datuk Bandar provided under the Federal Capital Act 1960, and these functions generally accord the mayor absolute powers in the management of the city.

For example, previous mayors have been known to administer matters in the city without reporting to the Minister — an act that clearly limits the relevance



UNRESOLVED ISSUES: Floods and traffic jams are a major headache for the people of Kuala Lumpur. The FT Ministry is tasked with formulating policies for the daily running of KL (above left and right), Putrajaya (below, left) and Labuan. But it merely plays a 'big brother' role and has no real power in KL.



of the Ministry.

While the Ministry can come up with policies (for example, it can make recommendations to the Housing and Local Government Ministry on the selling price of public housing units), inevitably it is the local council that goes about the administration and maintenance

of these homes.

In the case of enforcement activities in KL, the Ministry merely plays bridesmaid as enforcement officers from City Hall, the Immigration Department, Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, the police and Rela plan and execute particular operations.



The Ministry is in essence fangless and acts merely as a "co-coordinator" among various other Ministries.

Efforts have been made by the previous FT Minister Datuk Seri Zulhasnan Rafique to accord the Ministry greater decision-making powers through the introduction of the Modern City Management

concept, which was tabled before the Cabinet earlier this year.

The proposal involved the Ministry being given more powers to deal with issues such as transportation and floods — but we've heard nothing of the proposal since.

Malay Mail congratulates

Datuk Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin on his appointment as the new Minister and we wish him every success.

He has pledged to cut down on red tape and has promised to 'turun padang' to meet the people directly: It's all about improving service delivery at the end of the day, he said, and this is something that we agree with wholeheartedly.

It is time that the Ministry is provided a wider scope of powers to bring benefit to the people as a whole, and it can do a great deal in this regard as it knows best the woes enveloping KL, Putrajaya and Labuan.

With so much potential waiting to explode, let it not be a fangless tiger.