



## **Pentas Seni Merdeka set to increase social equity through public space activation**

*This series of arts and cultural events are one of many efforts with stakeholders to bolster Downtown Kuala Lumpur as a creative and cultural district*

**KUALA LUMPUR, 16 JULY** – What was once a thriving and vibrant city centre, now popularly known as Downtown Kuala Lumpur (Downtown KL), had decline and stagnated as result of rapid growth of Kuala Lumpur as the nation’s capital. Over the last decade, various efforts have been put by the government and the private sector to inject life and unearth the hidden gems of Kuala Lumpur. Aside from various infrastructure and connectivity projects such as the River of Life, Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) and more, Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) has collaborated with Think City to support the renewal and regeneration of Downtown KL. We are beginning to see results with a new lease of life to our historic area where buildings are restored, walkways and laneways have been upgraded, greening of the city is underway in addition to improvements to amenities and services.

This has been part of the city strategy to build back better and bring vibrancy back into the city. In line with this aspiration, Think City and DBKL are co-organisers of Pentas Seni Merdeka which kicked off on 16 July 2022, held along Jalan Raja, Kuala Lumpur against the iconic backdrop of Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad, Panggung Bandaraya and Bangunan Mahkamah Tinggi. The inaugural event was attended by Malaysians from all walks of life as well as a host of other dignitaries.

Pentas Seni Merdeka is a monthly, free, public arts initiative aimed at increasing social equity through public space activation and further poising Downtown KL to become a creative and cultural district. This month’s Pentas Seni Merdeka, which is the first of four more editions to come, featured the Ronggeng Melayu dance and artform which was also workshopped and curated by Nusantara Performing Arts Research Center (NusPARC). The inaugural event also featured a myriad of other activities including performances from the DBKL Combo & Cultural Artists, terrarium making workshops, local snacks shop, food trucks and many more.

The Mayor of Kuala Lumpur, Datuk Seri TPr Haji Mahadi Che Ngah said, “There is compelling case that creative and cultural activities and infrastructure are essential in creating a more vibrant city. Not only does it bring people together, but such content also sparks partnerships and dialogue, fuels local economies and encourages the transformation of a city. Hence, DBKL is actively reactivating Kuala Lumpur with key partners like Think City in one of their many efforts like Pentas Seni Merdeka post pandemic and hopes to see more collaborative efforts implemented to make our public spaces welcoming to and representative of Malaysians of all backgrounds.”

Managing Director of Think City, Hamdan Abdul Majeed said, “Great public spaces happen through community-driven placemaking. These great places are the foundation of great communities, which in turn are the building blocks of a prosperous, equitable and resilient society. They’re a place where people meet and socialise. Part of making magnetic public spaces is through the integration of creative and cultural content. Studies show that investments in such content can improve street safety, provide tourism and jobs, and more. And I believe these basic factors will continue to become far more important as we progress as a nation.”



“Through Pentas Seni Merdeka, Think City aims to establish and maintain a public arts platform within the pockets of Downtown KL as part of the strategic plan to develop it as Kuala Lumpur’s creative and cultural district. Our goal is to reposition the Downtown KL area as an iconic attraction with a focus on culture, arts, heritage, creativity, and innovation. This includes securing, activation and rehabilitating existing assets while connecting to a broader network which stimulates new economic activity and improves liveability,” he adds.

To support the vision of Downtown KL as a cultural and creative district, Think City launched the Downtown Kuala Lumpur Grants Programme in 2021 to empower and improve quality of life for various communities, develop new experiences in the city centre through innovative content, and to transform and revitalise spaces with creative solutions. The call for applications for the second round of the programme for 2022 will be on 19 July 2022.

The next editions of Pentas Seni Merdeka will be held on every second Saturday of the month at Jalan Raja with the second edition slated to be held on 10 September; followed by subsequent editions on 8 October, 12 November and 10 December. Each edition will feature different traditional art forms and experiences for visitors to experience.

For more information, visit [www.thinkcity.com.my](http://www.thinkcity.com.my) or use the hashtag #mythinkcity on social media. To learn more about Downtown Kuala Lumpur Grants Programme, visit [www.thinkcity.com.my/downtownkl](http://www.thinkcity.com.my/downtownkl)

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#### **About Think City**

Think City is an impact organisation established in 2009 to create more sustainable and equitable places for the benefit of all. Our knowledge, skills and strategies focus on urban solutions, the environment, social communities, and the cultural economy. Think City is a wholly owned subsidiary of Khazanah Nasional Berhad (the sovereign wealth fund of the Government of Malaysia). For more information, log on to [www.thinkcity.com.my](http://www.thinkcity.com.my) .

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