

Urban Renewal Act will cause Malays to lose political power, like in S'pore -

Dr M

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Summary

- Dr Mahathir Mohamad claims the proposed Urban Renewal Act will displace Malays and erode the community's political power.
- Ex-PM says if govt is to use Singapore as a model for redevelopment, Malays will similarly end up like their Singaporean counterparts - spread out and buried in non-Malay areas.

Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has joined in the criticism against the proposed Urban Renewal Act, arguing that it will disproportionately displace Malays and erode the community's political power.

Mahathir noted that the government had used Singapore as an example in advocating for the proposed law, but claimed that the island republic had evicted Malays in its redevelopment plans.

"In this urban renewal proposal, Singapore is being taken as an example. What Singapore did was to take over Malay kampungs and develop luxury apartments in their place.

"The kampung folk were then spread out haphazardly among other apartments. The kampung Malays no longer stayed together and were buried in housing where the majority was non-Malay.

"With this, Malay political power was compromised," he said on Facebook today.

Gap will widen

The veteran politician warned that if the Singaporean model is emulated in Malaysia, the number of urban Malays would reduce, and the gulf between the Malay and non-Malay communities would widen further.

Although he understands that squatters and dilapidated buildings need to be redeveloped, Mahathir said most of those affected would be Malays, as the community makes up the majority of residents in the older parts of major cities around the country.

"With this, Malays would end up living in rural areas and they are no longer able to enjoy the convenience of urban areas. And racial unity would not happen,"

Mahathir added.

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Backlash against proposed law

Critics of the proposed law, especially PAS, similarly claimed that it would displace urban Malays to the benefit of the non-Malays as the latter have the economic power to buy out redeveloped housing units.

PAS Youth, in particular, likened the alleged displacement of Malays to the plight of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation and is organising a rally to protest the bill.

Government leaders insist the Urban Renewal Act is intended to improve or redevelop dilapidated and, in some cases, abandoned housing in major cities and denied that it would displace residents as they would retain ownership.

Among others, the bill would reduce the consent threshold for redeveloping old housing from 100 percent of unit owners to 80 percent or as low as 51 percent, depending on the age and condition of the housing.

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