

Penang developers lament 'painful' approvals process
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The Penang government's 'cleaner, greener and greater' campaign seems to be backfiring as developers are using it to criticise what they claim is a painful process of getting their plans approved.

Penang Real Estate and Housing Developer Association (Redha) chairperson Jerry Chan (*right*) said that the cleaner and greener tagline is what the state is promoting, but the business community wants to see it not only in the environment and living.

"But also in the process and approvals for development; we want a better format to process approvals, not speedy rejections because of insufficient time for compliance," said Chan during his opening speech at the Association's 36th annual dinner in Penang last night.

Chan said Redha welcomed the CAT (Competent, Accountable and Transparent) manifesto for governance as it was the right foundation of managing a state.

But what real estate agents and housing developers would like to see was "discernment in exercising powers to reject" when there are too many conditions to fulfil in a short time, he added.

"(These are due to) conflicting requirements or because appeals are pending. OSC should mean One Stop Centre not 'One Speedy Cancellation'," he told the 700-strong crowd at the dinner.

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, Deputy Chief Minister I Mansor Othman, and Tanjung MP Chow Kon Yeow were present at the function.

'Solutions needed'

Penang is at the bottom of the list of the One Stop Centre (OSC) applications as it is behind schedule in its development plan approval process.

Last month, Chow, who is state local government and traffic management committee chairperson, was reported by Star saying that "even though Penang was listed the last among 11 states in its OSC status application, it was still considered a feat due to the thorough vetting process to ensure compliance of development projects" before they are approved.

He added that the local authority was not worried about the status of its OSC applications as development was well controlled in the state.

As at September, the Penang Municipal Council had 8,673 OSC status applications including 6,879 resolved (79.32 percent).

Meanwhile, Chan said Redha members wanted to continue to contribute, engage, advise and disagree when necessary during meetings with state officials.

"Not everything is said openly but say it we will; we mean well and our agenda is for the

common good of Penangites,” added the chairperson, who represents over 80 members in the state.

'Seeing more charges'

Chan said there had to be a viable and workable alternative to continuously provide housing for “all kinds of people”.

“To those who criticise, please provide a solution; we have proposed and the state has agreed and it is the way forward” he said.

Chan said the business community wanted to see 'greater' development, job and wealth creation, security, transportation, delivery system and profits.

While saying this, he commended the government for striving to uphold 'Godly values' when advancing the well-being of Penangites.

“However recently we are seeing greater charges, fees and levies. Greater pain!” he exclaimed.

“My hope is that developers will not be a 'soft target' for an easy source of increasing revenue for the state. It's painful!” he lamented.

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