

Urban renewal agenda not new, says PM

> 'Initial discussions to draft specific legislation to launch development around Kuala Lumpur held in 2013 before drafting of Act announced in 2015'

KUALA LUMPUR: The urban renewal agenda is not something new under the Madani government as it was initiated in 2012 with the formulation of the Urban Renewal Guidelines, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said initial discussions to draft a specific Urban Renewal Act to launch the development process around Kuala Lumpur were held in 2013 before the process of drafting the Act was announced in 2015.

Anwar said in 2020 former federal territories minister Tan Sri Annuar Musa had spearheaded the Urban Renewal Programme under Kuala Lumpur City Hall involving flats that were over 40 years old.

"In 2021, (then) housing and local government minister Datuk Zuraida Kamaruddin initiated the drafting of the Urban Renewal Bill while on March 22, 2022 (then) housing and local government minister Datuk Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican continued, and focused on the same principles.

"Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, who was then federal territories minister, in September 2022 even determined that Kuala Lumpur City Hall had identified 30 areas for renewal.

"Since 2012, 74 engagement sessions have been held and we have taken into

account the problems faced by the people," he said in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He was responding to a question from Tan Kar Hing (PH-Gopeng) on the government's commitment that the proposed Urban Renewal Bill would ensure that no owner, regardless of race, would be forcibly evicted from his land or premises as clearly stated in Article 13 of the Federal Constitution.

Anwar gave an assurance the Bill would not allow the transfer of the original ownership of a property or change the ethnic composition and status of land, whether Malay reserve, government-owned or permanent.

"Regarding ethnic ownership, for example the Sri Perlis Flats, if it currently has 70% Malay (ownership), it will remain because under this law there is no right for us to transfer the original ownership."

Anwar said there is, therefore, no issue at all of the original owner of a property, regardless of race, being forcibly evicted from his land or premises.

Regarding the requirement for a threshold of between 51% and 80% of property owners to agree to the proposed Bill, Anwar said this is necessary to facilitate the renewal process.

"The threshold is necessary. For

example, if there is a project where one person does not agree, this matter is delayed.

"So is there a process? It can be taken to court. How many years? Five years? Then the value given by the court will be the current value and he will get more.

"If we really want to defend the people, use this Bill so that we can improve. A house that is currently RM70,000 can be RM200,000, (but) if we do the valuation it will remain RM70,000."

Meanwhile, he said the government could save RM1.7 billion by expediting the implementation of the Sungai Golok Integrated River Basin project.

He said this could be made possible following the government's decision to consolidate all three phases of the flood mitigation project, including the phase overseen by the National Security Council, Bernama reported.

"The Sungai Golok project and the dredging and cleaning of the Sungai Golok estuary, involve both the Malaysian and the Thai governments.

"If we expedite and consolidate the project's three phases, we will stand to save RM1.7 billion. That is why I say the principles of governance and transparency in the project must be upheld."

Anwar was replying to Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman (Muar) who wanted to know the proactive measures taken by the government to deal with floods during each monsoon season as well as the unforeseen factors in areas that are frequently hit by floods and have the potential to be hit by floods in the future.