

Putrajaya to name Pudu jail developer soon, says PM
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 27 — Putrajaya will soon announce its decision on the company that will redevelop the historic Pudu Jail land here, Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today.

The land on which the historic Pudu Jail was previously sited has been left idle for the past decade as property owners UDA Holdings Bhd's recommendation awaits government approval.

"Itu later nanti... nanti (it is) coming (That is later... wait, wait (it is) coming)," the prime minister said today when asked whether his administration had decided on which company would be selected to carry out the project.

"Today I want to focus on this project (the Pudu bus station upgrade). If I mention other things then other things become bigger news. I want this story to be highlighted," Najib told reporters today.

The Urban Development Authority's efforts to trim its debts and raise money for its affirmative action programmes is being hampered by politics, with the Finance Ministry stalling on the recommendation by UDA Holdings board for a China-based company to redevelop the Pudu Jail land.

The Malaysian Insider understands that the government is facing pressure and lobbying from politically-connected local companies who are keen on taking part in the deal.

UDA Holdings has recommended China-based Everbright International Construction Ltd as its partner for the redevelopment of the eight-hectare Pudu Jail site. Sources say that the shortlisting process has been completed and Everbright's bid is in excess of RM2 billion, three times the value of the land.

The Najib administration had in July rejected UDA's sale of 3.56 acres of prime land in downtown Kuala Lumpur to 54 per cent Bumiputera-owned Nadayu Properties Bhd, formerly known as Mutiara Goodyear Development Bhd, for not having sufficient Bumiputera holding.

The decision over the Pudu Jail site will be yet another test of Najib's commitment to economic liberalisation.

UDA came under fire recently from Malay hardliners in Umno, Perkasa and Utusan Malaysia for allegedly abandoning the Bumiputera agenda by not appointing Bumiputera joint-venture turnkey investors for the proposed Bukit Bintang City Centre (BBCC) on the Pudu Jail site located on prime land in the heart of the capital's Golden Triangle.

Agency chairman Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed has denied these accusations, saying UDA has no choice but to be competitive as it no longer received any direct assistance from the government.

UDA, whose assets are estimated to be worth RM2 billion, is over RM900 million in debt. It also holds just RM90 million in cash with an outstanding RM104 million land premium for the Pudu site due in September.

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