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Ministry plans for age-friendly city

KUALA LUMPUR: The Women, Family and Community Development Ministry, together with the United Nations Development Programme, is in the midst of planning an age-friendly city, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said yesterday.

She said the main purpose of the project was to encourage more public participation in local planning with the aim of creating an environment that is child-elderly-and-disabled-friendly.

At the same time, the ministry was also considering a proposal to work with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) towards realising the concept of a child-friendly city in Malaysia, said Dr Wan Azizah, who is also the Minister for Women, Family and Community Development.

"This concept envisions a town or community where the voice, needs, interests and rights of a child will be of the utmost priority in developing policies and programmes at the local government level.

"Our cities have to be age-child-and gender-friendly as we prepare ourselves for this change in social profile," she said when closing the Malaysia Urban Forum 2019 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

Dr Wan Azizah said that currently 77 per cent of Malaysia's population resides in the urban



Wan Azizah

areas and that number is expected to increase to 80 per cent or 26 million people by 2030.

She said a large population in the cities would mean urbanisation challenges such as solid waste disposal, traffic congestion, air pollution, limited water resources, inadequate supply of affordable housing, demand for basic urban services and severity of flooding due to the urban heat island.

"We shall also be challenged by the changes in our demographic profile where Malaysia will become an aging society by 2030 in which almost 15.3 per cent of the population will be 60 years and above, bringing about new challenges in health service needs and suitable physical environments," she added.

Meanwhile, Dr Wan Azizah said

Malaysia is one of the few countries in the world that has a National Urbanisation Policy in recognition of the fact that the nation was becoming more urbanised.

She said efficient management, partnerships, transparency and accountability can enhance a city's competitiveness, attract investments and contribute towards the healthy economic growth of a city.

Dr Wan Azizah said liveability was also a core component of competitiveness, hence cities must have comprehensive basic facilities, infrastructure, good public transportation, safe neighbourhoods and a comfortable and clean environment.

"Regardless of where in the city one is or what one's social status is, all citizens should have equal access to public amenities and infrastructure," she said.

She also noted that the ministry is in the midst of drawing up a National Accessibility Action Plan for the disabled that will result in a community that is progressive and inclusive in line with the spirit of a new Malaysia.

Federal Territories Minister Khalid Abdul Samad; Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Raja Kamarul Bahrin Shah Raja Ahmad and UN-Habitat executive director Datuk Seri Maimunah Mohd Sharif were also present at the event. - Bernama