

Headline	Future developments must be balanced with greenery, says minister		
MediaTitle	Sunday Star		
Date	21 Apr 2019	Color	Full Color
Section	Focus	Circulation	175,986
Page No	14	Readership	527,958
Language	English	ArticleSize	218 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 10,971
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 32,913



Future developments must be balanced with greenery, says minister

THERE'S a need for more green spaces in Malaysia's rapidly developing urban LANDSCAPE.

Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin says future development plans should incorporate a good mix of concrete and greenery.

At present, a minimum 10% of an area to be developed must be allocated as a green space, such as public parks.

"But such green spaces are often tucked away in odd locations.

"It should be blended in appropriately to bring about its positive effects to beautify the area and lower city temperatures," she says.

On the possibility of increasing the 10% quota for green lungs, Zuraida says such an option has to be studied first before she can make a decision.

"There is also an unproportionate distribution of development, without it being properly spread out.

"It tends to be concentrated, and hence, everything is congested in one area.

"Such situations are difficult to undo," she adds.

On whether urban areas in Malaysia are overdeveloped, the Real Estate and Housing Developers Association Malaysia (Rehda) says the overall rate of development is under control.

Rehda president Datuk Soam Heng Choon says Malaysia is a developing nation and such developments is in accordance with the local authority's structure plan.

"We uphold the principle of sustainable development.

"It is definitely normal to see more development in urban areas compared to rural areas.

"With active migration to bigger towns and cities, there is definitely demand to develop more houses in urban centres," he says.

Soam says the concentration of development in certain locations with high demand can make it seem like there is overdevelopment.

"Otherwise, all developments follow the local councils' structure plan," he reiterates.

During any planning process for development that will affect the public, relevant agencies or bodies will encourage the people to give feedback to ensure that their voice is fairly heard.

"This can be in the form of engagement sessions, townhall meetings, and so forth.

"For instance, during the Local Plan stage, the relevant local council will engage the public to get their consensus.

"If more issues arise or should there be any unresolved matters, residents are allowed to discuss further with the relevant agencies for an amicable solution," Soam explains.

On green spaces in urban areas, he says developers are required to allocate a percentage of their development land for such areas.

"Rehda advocates the preservation and creation of green spaces and lungs in urban areas.

"We encourage developers, particularly our members, to pay attention to the environmental and sustainability needs of the areas where their projects are.

"We hope the Government will gazette green spaces to prevent them from being allocated for other purposes," he says.