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NATIONAL HOUSING POLICY 2.0

FACELIFT BOOST FOR OLD HOUSING SCHEMES

New minimum requirement for affordable unit is 3 rooms, 2 bathrooms, says Zuraida

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THE government is committed to providing better living for those residing in old housing schemes.

Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin said this was in line with the National Housing Policy 2.0 which was launched in January.

"One of the plans is to redevelop housing schemes over 30 years old, particularly the high-rise residential properties. Most of these units are small, some with only one or two rooms. Under the policy, the minimum requirement for an affordable housing unit would be three rooms and two bathrooms with a (built-up) size of 900 sq ft (83.61sq m).

"We are reviewing the old residential properties to provide bigger and more comfortable homes for the B40 income group. Many

of the existing housing schemes are congested and in poor condition with outdated facilities. We are moving towards smart development by monitoring and ensuring better management of the houses.

"To carry out any redevelopment project, at least 70 per cent of the house owners (for private strata homes) must agree to it, while the government could go ahead with the plan on public housing schemes," she said in an interview recently, citing the Taman Keramat Permai flats in Ampang Jaya where more than 100 residents were forced to evacuate after cracks appeared in one of the blocks.

To better protect strata property owners and occupants, she said the ministry was working on reforming the Commissioner of Buildings (COB) and Strata Management Act. This, she said, would include better monitoring of the buildings' condition and maintenance.

"Currently, there is no law to regulate the monitoring of strata homes. With the restructuring of the COB Department, we will be able to do better, have inspections to determine whether the buildings are fit for occupation. The wiring and sewage inspections, meanwhile are carried out every five years."

With this in mind, the government had in February launched

the National Community Policy, with the pilot project in Kota Baru launched two weeks ago.

"A team was employed to look into the management of the place, including maintenance and waste collection, among others. The community there was excited to learn about and take part in this.

"We also welcome corporate bodies to take part in low-cost residential schemes.

"Recently, I spoke to representatives from Akemi bedding on the possibility of providing remnants (of material) in their factories to the residents, to let them learn how to sew and sell bedsheets, made of high quality fabric, at cheaper prices," she said.

On another matter, Zuraida said the government would go ahead with the plan to transform landfills to waste-to-energy (WTE) plants.

"We have identified several landfills for this purpose, with the one in Lukut, Negri Sembilan fully operational in June.

"Previously, the perception of WTE was not good, but most people are now exposed (to the concept) and the technology has matured. There are examples of WTE plants in the middle of housing estates and cities in Japan.

"We can't leave things be, not with all the rubbish (at dumpsites). We will work actively in



Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin inspecting the cracks that appeared at the Taman Keramat Permai flats in Ampang Jaya recently with Economic Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali. PIC BY MOHD YUSNI ARIFFIN

promoting recycling activities and adopt the waste-to-money concept.

"It's untrue that I have turned a deaf ear (on WTE). I'm willing to sit down and discuss (with the affected parties). We will run the project on existing landfills and in fact didn't proceed with the incinerator project in Taman Beringin (Kepong, Kuala Lumpur)," she said on the project that received objection from residents in the area.

On affordable homes, Zuraida said the government was on the right track to achieve one million units for those in the B40 income group. She said there were 13 government projects while others would be built by the private sector. She said the ministry was mulling the implementation of a rent-to-own programme to encourage tenants at public hous-

ing schemes to buy the unit after five years.

"In the sixth year, tenants who have been paying their rent in a timely manner are eligible to apply for bank loans with (payment receipts as) supporting documents. I am also considering doing it for the new and existing housing schemes for houses priced at RM300,000 and below under the home ownership campaign.

"We are in talks with Syarikat Perumahan Negara Bhd (SPNB) and PRIMA (1Malaysia People's Housing Scheme) to see if they could finance the rent-to-own scheme.

"Eight Chinese-based firms have also voiced their support for the scheme," she said in an interview held to commemorate Pakatan Harapan's one year in power.