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Zuraida (seated left) attends the press conference after officiating at the opening of SPNB Sarawak's new office in Riveredge Commercial Centre in Kuching.

# Act to be amended to include abandoned housing projects

Jacqueline David

**KUCHING:** The federal Ministry of Housing and Local Government (KPKT) is in the process of amending Act 118 of the Housing Development (Control and Licensing) Act 1966 to include abandoned housing projects.

Minister Datuk Zuraida Kamaruddin said the amended Act could be in the form of setting up a fund to save abandoned housing projects in the country and to ease the burden of buyers of failed housing projects.

According to her, currently a certain percentage of the development projects by developers are placed under the 'sinking fund'.

"So maybe from here, we could increase a little bit more to include funds for the abandoned projects.

"Currently, there is no appropriate action to be taken to prevent these abandoned (housing) projects because (at the) end of the day, it's the buyer who would face difficulties with deposits, bank loans and a house that never materialised.

"That's why besides creating a special fund to save abandoned projects, KPKT is also in the midst of forming and planning to do an Act to control these abandoned projects.

"At the moment, our law is rather loose for us to blacklist developers and we cannot take action against them as they would be declared bankrupt," she said during a press conference after officiating at the opening of Syarikat Perumahan Negara Bhd (SPNB) Sarawak's new office at Riveredge Commercial Centre here yesterday.

When asked about the implications on buyers of houses under abandoned projects, she said as of now, buyers would have to take their own legal action on the developers.

"In the near future, once we have the fund scheme to save abandoned projects, we would be able to help the developers to complete the project.

"At the moment, it is a bit

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Datuk Zuraida Kamaruddin

difficult; thus buyers would have to take legal action on their own.

"If a developer company is already a bankrupt, there would be no other developer who would take over – of course it would be a loss," she added.

For now, she said in order to save the abandoned projects, these projects would be put up for open tender.

"We will announce on abandoned projects; we open tender for any contractors who want to apply, or they may do their own valuation if it's worth taking over, and if it is, they would apply, and we would go through with them to continue the project," she said.

She added that once the 'Save The Abandoned Projects Fund' got formulated, it would somehow affect the existing Act 118 of Housing Development (Control and Licensing) Act 1966.

"On the 'Save Abandoned Projects Fund', it is under planning – we will amend that into the existing Act 118.

"Once it is formulated and finalised, it will be able to protect the buyers.

"We are also in the midst of the formulation of Residential Tenancy Act, which could also help the buyers," she said.

As of now, SPNB Sarawak has shown a good record of no abandoned project in the state.

"For SPNB Sarawak, there's no record of abandoned projects. As far as I am concerned, there's none; even if there are abandoned projects, maybe those are under private developers.

"Furthermore, Sarawak is quite independent when it comes to housing because here, you have the Housing Development Corporation (HDC) that takes care of the housing development," she said.

Meanwhile, SPNB's recent announcement on the launching of six new designs for the Rumah Mesra Rakyat (RMR) scheme that would also include still houses, Zuraidah said these schemes would also be applicable for longhouses in Sarawak.

She said the new designs would also provide applicants with more options compared with only two designs previously.

"Yes, the longhouses are also qualified; in fact the state government has announced a scheme for group houses, for the villages and the longhouses.

"SPNB could also think of how to help build longhouses. Last time, I announced a longhouse policy, so it's easy for us to have a standard that we could follow, and the longhouse folk could relocate to a new way of life, new longhouse concept and new facilities," she said.

To date, a total of 47,153 houses under RMR scheme have been built nationwide.

This year, Zuraidah said SPNB had been entrusted by the government to build 3,000 RMR units, of which 749 are currently under construction, while another 1,531 are in the process of signing.

"We received a lot of demands for RMR all over the country. In Sarawak alone, there are already more than 6,000 requests, but we have to prioritise and we will select the ones that are most in need," she added.

Also present at the press conference yesterday were Tebrau MP Steven Choong Shiau Yoon, SPNB chief executive officer Datuk Haslee Isnin, Mutiara Mortgage and Credit Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Shaharony Mat Nor, and SPNB Sarawak director Wan Habeeb Ali Wan Yap Mohdzar.