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## Rehda: Thank you for listening and your willingness to make changes

BY **TAN AI LENG**

**T**he Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association (Rehda) lauded Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin's willingness to listen to the needs of stakeholders in handling the various housing and development issues.

Rehda president Datuk Soam Heng Choon says the minister had taken cognizance of the association's input and wish list that was sent to the government in May 2018.

"The ministry has been working on addressing some of the highlighted issues for the past one year. For instance, in addressing the affordable housing issue, the ministry has already launched the Dasar Perumahan Negara 2018 – 2025 and placed all overlapping agencies handling affordable housing under her ministry," says Soam.

Another move by the ministry that has benefitted the mass market, adds Soam, is rolling out the national Home Ownership Campaign (HOC) which encourages homeownership and provides a platform for developers to market their unsold units.

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Soam: We are hopeful that the journey towards better governance and transparency will continue.

Besides that, the ministry has also commenced the process of setting up a Central Housing Database which will consolidate data from multiple agencies at the federal, state and local government levels.

Soam believes that this database will help both planners and developers to make more informed decisions in building the right product, with the right pricing, in the right location at the right time. It will also facilitate decision-making when it comes to industry guidelines and policies, he adds.

In improving the rental market, he notes that the ministry is also formulating a robust Rental Tenancy Act which could help facilitate

Rent-to-Own Schemes as well as improve protection for both owners and tenants.

However, there are still many issues that need to be addressed between the federal and state governments; such as reducing the costs of doing business which will ultimately be transferred to homebuyers.

According to Soam, this could be achieved by reducing compliance costs and land premium as well as all development charges.

"Having a unified approval process that will reduce development time will translate to cost savings," he says.

He notes that there should also be a common bumiputra quota policy and a transparent release mechanism, as unsold units attract high holding cost which will ultimately be passed on to buyers.

"We understand that resolving all issues at one time is impossible. However, we are hopeful that the journey towards better governance and transparency will continue and we at Rehda are always supportive of policies and initiatives that will make housing affordable and the industry more robust."