

'Upgrade old facilities at public housing'

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RESIDENTS of the Seri Sabah public housing (PA), off Jalan Ikan Ayu in Kuala Lumpur are adamant that safety precautions be made a priority at the high-density housing area following a fire there on Sunday.

Several residents said the old wiring and haphazard parking situation were a cause for concern as the blaze destroyed six units at Block 70.

One affected resident Law Pui Yee, 32, said the authorities need to urgently look into upgrading the facilities at the ageing buildings.

"There have been smaller fires here before but this is the worst.

"Ours was particularly bad as the ceiling of the units at the highest floor is made of highly flammable wood.

"It is a total loss for me. All important documents, furniture and clothing were destroyed in the fire," she told *StarMetro* yesterday when met in SK Seri Cheras, the temporary relief centre the fire victims were housed at.

"The timing is particularly devastating as it was the second day of Chinese New Year," she said, adding that she and her parents had been living in PA Seri Sabah for 30 years.

Law was, however, glad no one was hurt.

Joe Boy Joseph, 60, another affected resident, said the fire extinguishers and hose reels need to be in working condition.

He said there would have been minimal damage if the fire safety equipment was properly maintained.

"At least then we could have saved some of our belongings.

"We had just reached Kuala Lumpur after a trip to Melaka and stopped for dinner when I got a call about the fire," said Joseph who was staying at the relief centre while his wife and four children were with relatives.

Hassan Yeop Yshoib, 68, who

Cheras flat fire victims lament loss of property, documents on second day of Chinese New Year

had lived at PA Seri Sabah since 1985, said the infrastructure at ageing buildings need to be replaced, such as wiring, water pipes and lifts.

"Otherwise, we may see more incidents like this."

Mohd Hazim, 25, said the fire could have been put out faster if there had been better access for the firefighters.

"It took a bit of time for the firefighters to come into the area as the access roads were partially blocked by vehicles.

"Double-parking is a common sight as there are not enough parking bays here," he said, adding that a multilevel carpark built by Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) was not enough to cater to the number of vehicles there.

Perumahan Awam (PA) Seri Sabah 3B Residents Association chairman Zainal Abidin Abdul Wahab hoped the incident would be a trigger for positive changes among the authorities and residents.

He was glad that Bandar Tun Razak MP Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail had asked DBKL to upgrade the facilities there by next year.

"This will involve rearranging the parking and hopefully other safety measures.

"I also hope the residents will change their mindset and take better care of the area," he said, adding that there were 1,020 units at the public housing.

Kuala Lumpur Fire and Rescue Department director Muhammad Salleh Abdul said according to the department's initial forensic investigations, there was almost a 95% chance that the fire was caused by a electrical wiring distribution board at the 17th floor.

Each displaced family was provided cash aid of RM7,300 as well as counselling services.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal



Six units of Block 70 at the 17th floor of PA Seri Sabah were destroyed in a fire. — Photos: LOW LAY PHON and WILLIAM GARY/The Star



(From left, standing) Dr Wan Azizah, Tan and Dr Zaliha meeting with Joseph (seated) and other fire victims at the temporary relief centre.

Territories) Dr Zaliha Mustafa said RM5,000 was allocated to each family by the Federal Territories Department and RM1,000 from DBKL.

Dr Wan Azizah's office contributed another RM1,000 while the Women, Family, and Community Development Ministry, through the Social Welfare Department contributed RM300.

Deputy Women, Family, and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Dr Noraini

Ahmad said two counsellors were on standby to aid the victims.

"They have gone through a traumatic experience, so we will provide help if needed.

"Basic necessities and food are also being provided while they are at the relief centre," she told reporters after a site visit.

Also present were Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Kamarulzaman Mat Salleh, Dr Wan Azizah and Cheras MP Tan Kok Wai.