

'Big challenge to remedy land deals'

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Buying back plots sold will be too expensive, say KL MPs

THE unity government faces a big challenge in rectifying the sale of government-owned land in Kuala Lumpur to developers, says an MP.

"We inherited this matter and are trying hard to fix it, but it is difficult and costly," said Tan Kok Wai.

The Cheras MP said that it was unreasonable to expect Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) to buy back land sold to third parties.

"The process of repurchasing lands from developers is expensive.

"Furthermore, it will open the floodgates as Kuala Lumpur residents facing developments in their neighbourhood may also want their parks, open spaces and fields back," he said.

He was responding to the sale of 10.1ha land in Taman Rekreasi Ayer Panas in Setapak for a mixed development project.

Part of the land on Lot 29780 comprised a community park.

Tan, who is a seven-term MP, called for greater transparency and accountability from government agencies like DBKL and Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur Land and Mines Office (PTGWP) as he had seen numerous cases of government land, green lungs and open spaces being sold for mixed development projects.

"We have been pushing for more transparency on the matter (sale of government land).

"We hope the KSN (Chief Secretary to the Government), who is Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur Land Exco (JKTWPKL) chairman, explains why government land is being alienated and sold when the city is facing a lack of green spaces," Tan said.

On Aug 21, *StarMetro* in its story, "Non-gazetted land slips down cracks", reported that the land was sold in 2018 for a mixed development project.

The developer paid a premium of RM129,702,796 for the land.

Then in early 2019, the government decided to cancel the deal and returned the land premium



Kuala Lumpur residents value their green lungs. — Filepic

to the company.

However, the company sued for breach of contract and won at the High Court and Court of Appeal.

Wangsa Maju MP Zahir Hassan agreed that the issue of government land being sold to third parties was passed down from previous administrations.

"Regarding the Setapak land, we must respect the court verdict.

"Moving forward, it is best to ensure sufficient green space is included in the development masterplan and that the area is open to the public.

"DBKL can include such conditions in the development order or if that is not possible, the developer can take it on as its corporate social responsibility (CSR) project," he said.

StarMetro in a previous report



Zahir: It is best to ensure sufficient green space is included in the development masterplan.

quoted Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's political secretary Azman Abidin as saying that 52 plots of land in Kuala Lumpur – some reserved as green lungs and open spaces – had been alienated and leased to



Flashback to *StarMetro*'s report on Aug 21.

developers and businessmen between 2020 and 2022.

In 2018, then Federal Territories minister Khalid Abdul Samad said the government had set up a task force to investigate 97 questionable land

deals in Kuala Lumpur, ordering 19 to be cancelled and 15 to be renegotiated.

He said 20 transactions would be subjected to further scrutiny while the remaining 43 deals had been given the go-ahead.