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BEYOND the rusted grille on a cobweb-filled window of an apartment building in Masjid India lies a million-ringgit view of Kuala Lumpur's gleaming skyline – a stark contrast to the deteriorating conditions inside the flats.

Once a symbol of prestige, the ageing Malayan Mansion and the neighbouring Selangor Mansion now bear the scars of neglect.

Certain areas offer a view of the city's achievements like the iconic Kuala Lumpur Tower.

However, inside the flats' grounds, rubbish clutters walkways and air wells while staircase walls are stained with betel juice leaving unsightly red-dish-brown streaks.

Air-conditioner units hang precariously on the sides of the buildings and clothes are draped on makeshift lines to dry.

The narrow walkways, lined with old shop signs and faded paint on the walls, reflect a building that has seen no modern upgrades in years.

The overall impression each building gives is one of dilapidation, with its infrastructure in urgent need of maintenance or renovation to bring it up to today's standards.

The flats are two eight-storey twin structures in the heart of the Masjid India enclave.

Built in 1969, these once-iconic commercial and residential blocks now show their 55 years.

The initial land lease, from 1964 to 1994, was renewed from 1994 to 2024. It expired on Sept 30.

In addition, developer and property manager United Malayan Realty Sdn Bhd had informed unit owners that the lease would not be renewed.

Instead, the developer plans to apply for strata titles.

In letters addressed to the unit owners in July, the developer stated that the subdivision process would see the buildings split into individual strata titles.

The process is expected to take three to four years, pending approval from local authorities.

During this period, owners are required to continue following the terms of their existing lease on a month-to-month basis, which includes the payment of quit rent and service charges.

The letter further details that owners must contribute towards the costs of the strata title appli-

# Owners of KL flats worry over properties' future

## Developer gives those in two old Masjid India flats chance to apply for strata titles as current lease expires

*TheStar*  
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cation process, including legal and surveyor fees.

A part payment of RM5,000 is to be made within six months of the letter's issuance, to cover these expenses.

Additionally, once the strata title for each unit is issued, owners would need to execute a memorandum of transfer (MOT) within one month, with all related legal fees, stamp duty and other costs borne by them.

The developer also stated that it would only proceed with the subdivision once 90% of the owners' contributions had been collected.

### Owners' worries

Some unit owners became anxious after the land lease expired, and contacted *StarMetro*.

"I purchased my Malayan Mansion unit 30 years ago for RM80,000 and have seen a significant return on my investment over the years.

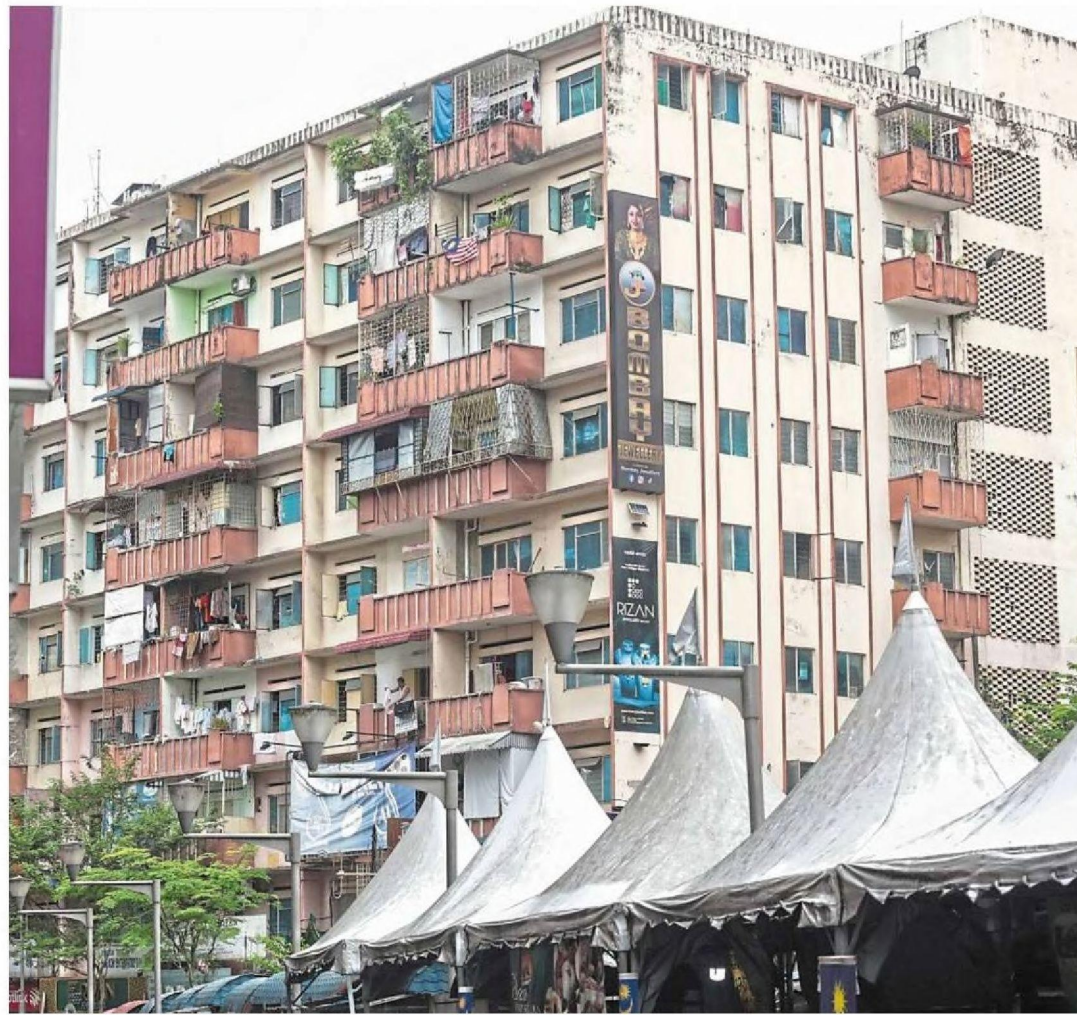
"However, with the lease now expired, I am deeply concerned about the future of my property.

"There is a lot of uncertainty, and I feel like we haven't been given enough information," said M. Mehrotra.

"I just hope the developer can be transparent and accountable throughout this process, especially regarding the application for strata title.

"Now that the lease has expired, I feel like I no longer have a say in my own property," he added.

JK Shin, who owns several units in both flats, said: "I feel that for something as important as this, there should be a proper town hall session to clear the air over the matter."



Malayan Mansion is now 55 years old. — Photos: YAP CHEE HONG/The Star

When *StarMetro* reached out to the developer's lawyer Pathi & Associates for comments, a spokesperson confirmed that the decision was not to renew the lease and that they would apply for strata titles instead.

"The landlord has sent letters to all registered apartment owners in Selangor Mansion and Malayan Mansion, offering them the opportunity to apply for strata titles.

"Applying for strata titles is a

much better option compared to simply renewing the lease, as this ensures the rights of each apartment owner," said the spokesperson.

The spokesperson added that the process would take about two to three years, as it required compliance with regulations under the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur Lands and Mines Office and Kuala Lumpur City Hall.

National House Buyers

Association honorary secretary-general Datuk Chang Kim Loong said the decision by the Selangor and Malayan Mansions developer to apply for strata titles was a step in the right direction.

"What this means for unit owners is that instead of being mere lessees, they will now have full ownership with strata title, which is a much stronger form of ownership.

"Having a strata title allows owners to use their units as collateral for bank loans, establish a management corporation (MC) or joint management body (JMB) to manage the building as they see fit, create house rules to control the number of people renting units and regulate the tenant population.

"They will also have the freedom to sell their units at any time without needing approval from the developer.

"Ultimately, this could lead to significant improvement in the overall management and quality of life in the mansions compared to what we see today," said Chang.

### Through the years

Shakila Soeraya, 59, said Malayan Mansion was once beautiful.



Kuala Lumpur Tower is part of the view outside the windows of Malayan Mansion flats.

"I have been very happy," she said of her 30 years there.

"I worked for many years for a non-governmental organisation nearby and so I chose to live here, even though my family home is in Setapak."

Shakila said when she moved in three decades ago, the building was mostly occupied by locals working in the area.

However, by the early 2000s, the occupants were primarily transient foreign workers, who made up around 80% of tenants.

"It was then that the quality of living started going downhill.

"A JMB or MC in place would allow owners to take control of building management, including regulating the number of tenants.

"This will help maintain the quality of living and ensure better oversight of the property," added Shakila.

### Redevelopment possibility

With the expiration of the leasehold, some believe that Malayan Mansion and Selangor Mansion may be part of a larger plan for future redevelopment.

The properties have been identified as two of the 139 areas earmarked for redevelopment in Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2040.

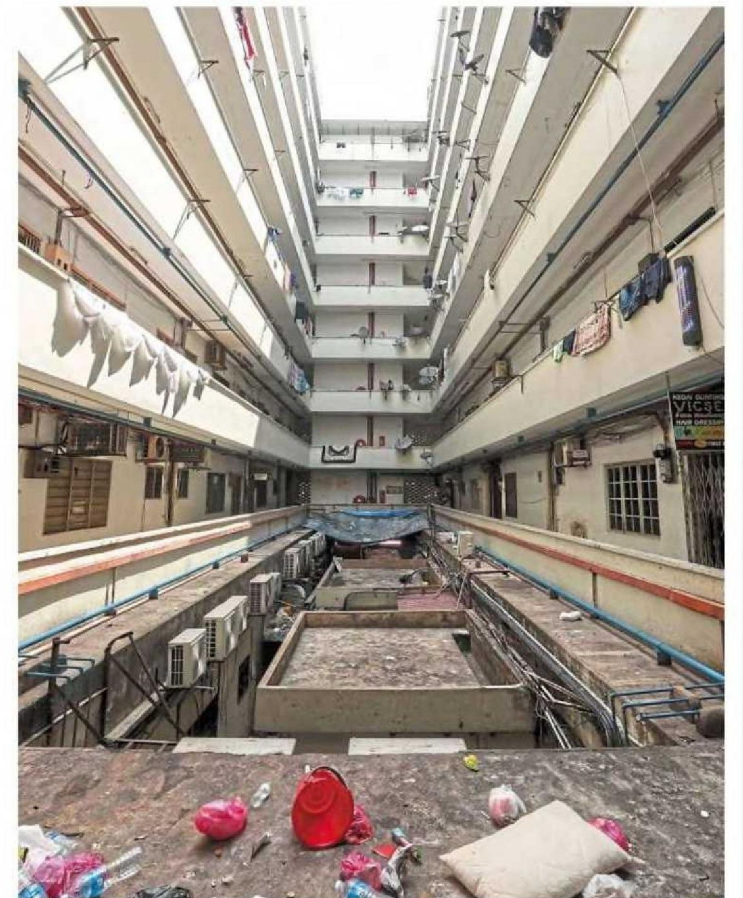
This redevelopment will be made possible with the proposed Urban Redevelopment Act (URA) aimed at revitalising older, deteriorating urban areas in the city, particularly those with ageing infrastructure and buildings.

The National Council for Local Government (MNKT) recently approved the implementation of the URA.

Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming emphasised the need for the law to address deteriorating urban areas, noting that Malaysia lagged behind other countries in urban renewal.

The ministry is proposing an approval threshold of 80% for buildings under 30 years old and 75% for properties older than 30 years old.

The URA Bill is expected to be tabled in Parliament next year.



Air well at Selangor Mansion littered with rubbish thrown by irresponsible tenants and residents on higher floors.



Barber shop in Selangor Mansion catering to those who live and work in the area.



Menara DBKL can be seen from this apartment in Malayan Mansion. (Right) Bustling shops at the flats in Jalan Masjid India, Kuala Lumpur.

