

Safety of city projects the priority

Developers urged to work with DBKL to restore confidence among buyers, foreign visitors

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MINISTER in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories) Dr Zaliha Mustafa is stressing that safety should take priority over speed with regard to property developments in Kuala Lumpur.

She made the comment in response to reports that several developers were delaying project launches due to Kuala Lumpur City Hall's (DBKL) new geotechnical requirements.

"This perception that Kuala Lumpur is not safe, especially after the Masjid India sinkhole incident, must be addressed seriously," she said.

"Safety isn't just about protecting the city's residents; it is also about reassuring foreign visitors.

"We need to take steps to restore confidence in Kuala Lumpur's safety.

"The challenge is striking a bal-



Dr Zaliha: I would want to know if the ground beneath a building is safe.

ance between strict safety standards and ensuring development in the city continues to thrive.

"Personally, I will want to know if the ground beneath a building is safe."

Dr Zaliha was responding to a question from *StarMetro* on a



Rescue teams heading deep into the affected area to find the tourist who fell into the sinkhole in Jalan Masjid India, Kuala Lumpur. — Filepic

StarBiz report titled "Developers postpone several KL property launches".

According to the report, CIMB Research found that these postponements stemmed from new geotechnical study requirements introduced by DBKL.

It said the requirements might lengthen approval process for new projects.

The requirements were implemented following an incident where a 48-year-old tourist from India fell into an eight-metre-deep sinkhole at Jalan Masjid India, Kuala Lumpur, in August.

Despite search-and-rescue efforts, she was never found.

Following the tragedy, Dr Zaliha temporarily halted construction approvals in the city to allow for the formation of a task force.

It is tasked with reviewing and improving standard operating procedures (SOPs) for developments in the city.

As a result, geotechnical studies are now required for all development projects.

"Previously, geotechnical studies were mandatory for high-risk areas such as hill slopes or locations with unstable soil.

"But after the Masjid India incident, we have made it a requirement across the board to prevent such incidents from happening again," she said.

Dr Zaliha said that while experts confirmed the stability of Kuala Lumpur's Kenny Hill Formation (a stable layer of hardened rock and sediment), deeper layers beneath the city such as limestone caves extending down 2,000 to 2,500m could pose potential risks.

"The sinkhole happened on flat ground, and we are waiting for the final report.

"Many agencies are involved, and we need to ensure the findings are as accurate as possible.

"Until then, the geotechnical

study requirement remains in place for all projects," she added.

Dr Zaliha reassured developers that the government was open to collaboration.

"We need to instil confidence in residents and visitors.

"It is better to be safe than sorry, particularly when constructing multi-storey buildings," she reiterated.

She encouraged developers to reach out to DBKL's task force that includes the Mineral and Geoscience Department.

"Our agencies have geological data for some areas.

"If that data is sufficient, developers may not even need to conduct their own studies.

"So, talk to us. Our task force operates with clear SOPs and is here to help," she said.

Dr Zaliha said the government's safety measures were aimed at building public trust while keeping Kuala Lumpur attractive to investors.