# Hopeful for better housing conditions

## Kuchai Jaya Flats residents upbeat site earmarked for redevelopment under urban renewal plan to create livable homes

**KUALA LUMPUR:** At the Kuchai Jaya Flats in Seputeh, the parking lot is overrun with bushes, potholes and puddles of black water emitting a foul stench, caused by leaking sewage pipes from ageing residential units.

Built in the 1980s, the flats are marked by cracked walls, dark corridors and clogged drains.

"We call this place Jumanji Flats," said a 33-year-old resident who wants to be called Saiful. He has rented a unit there for RM350 a month for the past 10 years.

"There is a lift, but as far as I know, it has been out of order for decades."

He lives on the fifth floor with his pregnant wife.

"I just hope my wife doesn't end up giving birth to our first child on the stairs," he joked.

Residents' representative and long-time resident Hamid Kadir, 55, recalled two dengue-related deaths a few years ago.

"When someone dies, we carry the body down the stairs using a stretcher," he said.

Hamid, who purchased his unit for RM20,000 in the 1990s, said according to a recent Bernama report current valuations range between RM75,000 and RM120,000 – significantly lower than units at a nearby condominium just 50m away, where prices reach RM800,000 and monthly rents start at RM1,500.

A similar situation exists at the PKNS flats in Jalan Kuching, a 15-block, four-storey complex with 600 units.

Residents association treasurer Ridzwan Mohd Ali, 61, said the area began deteriorating after 10 blocks, previously army quarters, were vacated in 2008.

"These blocks have been left abandoned and are now hotspots for drug activities and crime," he said.

A Bernama survey found evidence of occupancy by homeless individuals and foreigners, despite the lack of utilities.

Ridzwan said two people died of overdoses in the abandoned blocks, raising concerns for the 1,000 residents still living in the remaining five.

He expressed hope following news that the flats are among 139 sites earmarked for redevelopment by Kuala Lumpur City Hall under the national urban renewal plan.

The initiative aims to revitalise decaying housing areas, replace unsafe structures and create livable homes.

Over 70% of residents have agreed to participate in the redevelopment, which promises replacement units.

Ridzwan hopes the new flats will be at least 800sq ft in size, compared with the current 450 – 650 sq ft.

A positive example of redevelopment is 1Razak Mansion in Salak Selatan. Previously consisting of 399 – 504sq ft units built in the 1960s, the area now features 800sq ft, three-bedroom apartments, along with shops, a market, preschool, Islamic kindergarten, *surau* and a multi-purpose hall, Bernama reported.

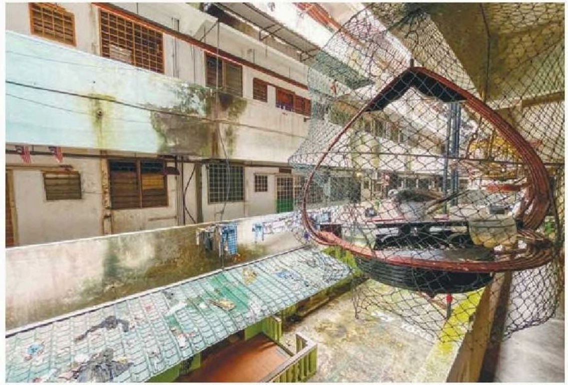
"Our old units had only one bedroom. Now, it's much better," said resident Azni Saharin, 71, a teacher at the kindergarten.

According to its management corporation chairman Anthony Tan Gim Guan, the redevelopment, involving 658 units, succeeded only after all residents agreed.

The project began in 2014, and residents received keys in 2017. Tan acknowledged early resistance but said engagement sessions and agreements helped build trust. He advised other communities to stay informed and open to negotiation with the government and developers.

However, he raised concerns about high maintenance fees post-redevelopment, saying many residents pay hundreds of ringgit monthly – compared with tens previously – despite being from the B40 income group.

According to PLANMalaysia under the Housing and Local Government Ministry, 534 potential redevelopment sites have been identified nationwide, with 139 in Kuala Lumpur alone, representing a potential gross development value of RM355.3 billion.



Kuchai Jaya Flats is among 534 potential redevelopment sites that have been identified nationwide. – ***AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN***

Current redevelopment laws under Section 57 of the Strata Titles Act 1985 require unanimous agreement from all property owners. This often blocks progress, as a single objection can derail entire projects.

To address this, the ministry is drafting an Urban Renewal Bill, expected to be tabled this year. The proposed Bill lowers the threshold for consent: 75% for buildings over 30 years old, 80% for those under 30 years, and 51% for unsafe structures.

Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming, during a recent site visit to Kuchai Jaya Flats and other locations said the Bill is not intended to seize property owners' rights.

"If 99% agree but one person refuses, the entire project is cancelled. It's unfair," he said, citing the stalled redevelopment of Desa Kudalari Apartments due to one objection.

Nga added that the Bill builds on Urban Renewal Implementation Guidelines approved by the Cabinet in 2023, which had existed since 2013 but lacked implementation by previous administrations.