

## LEADER

NATIONAL HOUSING MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

## Urban wellbeing

The B40 income group can bid adieu to 20 years of laments as inclusive development comes their way in the shape of very livable space

**D**EMOLISHING to rebuild is an idea whose time has come. It is an idea that has been tried and tested as well, albeit in Singapore. Finally, the bottom 40 per cent (B40) income group can see their wish for a quality, affordable home fulfilled under the People's Housing Project (PPR). A 2011 study conducted by Goh Ai Tee and Ahmad Yahaya of the Department of Architecture, Faculty of the Built Environment, Universiti Malaya indicated that there were 63,377 of such units in the country, of which 34,106 were in Kuala Lumpur. Many of the PPRs were built in 1998 to implement the country's no-squatter policy and they bear the marks of ailing apartments in need of urgent repair. Complaints from apartment dwellers are aplenty. Water dripping through walls and ceilings, clogged manholes, malfunctioning lifts are some common laments.

All this should be a thing of the past when the National Housing Management Corporation comes into operation under the Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Ministry. But first, a law

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needs to be passed to give life to this corporation. As this paper has learned, the cabinet has given its nod and a draft of the National Housing Management Corporation Act is in the Attorney-General's Chambers for review with a view to tabling it in Dewan Rakyat. The setting up of the corporation will also put to bed a recurrent problem associated with PPRs. The current practice is for the Federal Government to build the PPR and hand it over to the state government to manage once completed. This is where the problem often rears its ugly head. Many PPRs in Selangor and Penang are facing issues of neglect. Dilapidation of facilities sets in and residents take the easy way out. Blaming falling lifts, some throw rubbish and discarded furniture from high floors. Occasionally, this ends in death as it happened to a 15-year-old schoolboy when a chair landed on his head at the Sri Pantala PPR.

Of course, this lack of civic-mindedness cannot be eradicated by the proposed National Housing Management Corporation. This requires something more — an internal sea change through the education of the heart. Apartment dwellers need to learn to be compassionate to fellow residents. People who find it hard to share a common space with others must be denied a place. Besides, people who are not civic-minded will contribute to high maintenance costs for building managers. It is understood that the National Housing Department is looking at 20-year-old PPRs as targets of the "demolish and rebuild" model. Under this model, the entire high-rise will be demolished and a new PPR will be erected in its place. A plus point of this model is the ability to build in low maintenance from ground up. Toa Payoh in Singapore may just be the model to be replicated. B40 income group could now bid adieu to 20 years of laments as inclusive development comes their way in the shape of a very livable space. This is truly urban wellbeing. Way to go, National Housing Department.

9TH WORLD URBAN FORUM

## PM: WE SEEK A JUST, INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Najib highlights Malaysia's success in managing rapid urbanisation

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**P**RIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday presented to the world a slew of Malaysia's success in managing rapid urbanisation, an achievement which he said was backed by strong economic fundamentals.

Among the crowning jewels was the World Economic Forum's (WEF) latest report, in which Malaysia was ranked first above all Asian emerging economies for inclusiveness.

Speaking before 200 international delegates at the 9th World Urban Forum, Najib said as with urbanisation, humanistic values and people-centric development should not be neglected.

"However, in this mission, we will not forsake our values. We seek a just, inclusive and sustainable society in which no Malaysian is left behind. On that note, may I mention that in WEF's latest report, Malaysia was ranked first out of all Asian emerging economies for inclusiveness, and that is a record of which all Malaysians can be proud."

Among others, he named Klinik 1Malaysia, exemptions under Goods and Services Tax (GST) and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as efforts to cushion any arising difficulties faced by the people due to urbanisation.

"We have put in place an extensive range of programmes to provide hundreds of thousands of affordable houses; assistance to those with low income; medical care at very low costs through our 1Malaysia clinics; exemptions to GST for essential food items; training courses and initiatives; and, incentives for businesses, especially SMEs, which are the backbone of our economy."

Najib also said Malaysia had experienced a greater shift in the public transportation sector following the setting up of Mass Rapid Transit lines and the planned Rapid Transit System,



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak speaking at the 9th World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

which would link Johor Baru and Singapore.

"This was an area that was neglected in the past, as too much emphasis was placed on the automotive industry. But our cities need to be livable. And, they need to be sustainable, too."

In terms of broadband connectivity as part of the country's foray into digital economy, Najib said Malaysia planned to achieve 95 per cent coverage by the year 2020, and 100 per cent by 2040.

On a global comparison, Najib said the Malaysian experience mirrored those of Asian and African trends, as highlighted in the New Urban Agenda adopted at Quito 2016.

"The world's urban population is expected to almost double by 2050, with cities hosting close to 70 per cent of the globe's population. This growth will be concentrated in Asia and Africa, with Asia projected to have more than half of the world's mega cities."

"Our experience in Malaysia reflects those trends, as we had an urbanisation rate of under 30 per cent in the 1970s, yet today that figure is already more than 75 per cent, and is expected to exceed 85 per cent by 2050."

Najib said despite the challenges beforehand, Malaysia's growth had been supported by strong economic fundamentals.

"The Economic Transformation Programme my government put in place in 2010 has delivered 2.26 million jobs, more than 1 million of which are high-income jobs."

He said proactive economic measures had kept inflation and unemployment rate low.

"Inflation and unemployment had been kept low. We have brought the deficit down from 6.7

per cent in 2009 to 3 per cent last year. Thanks to strong, proactive measures, we recovered quickly from the global crisis of 2008 to 2009, and we have had years of healthy growth."

"The World Bank reports that 'the Malaysian economy is progressing from a position of strength', which puts us in a good place as we formulate the Transformasi Nasional 2050, or TN50, initiative."

Najib expressed hope that the efforts would culminate into another success story — Malaysia as among the top 20 nations by 2050.

"As we move from being a developing country to becoming a high-income economy, our next aim is to become one of the top 20 leading nations of the world by 2050."

Earlier, Najib congratulated Datuk Maimunah Sharif on her appointment as United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) executive director.

"We are all proud that a Malaysian public official has been elected to head such an esteemed global organisation, and we wish her well in her new role."

Also present was Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Tan Sri Noh Omar.

## Correction

**I**N the caption to a picture with the headline "Instrument of Appointment" on page 4 of our paper yesterday, we mistakenly identified Istana Negara as Istana Budaya. The error is regretted.