

KERATAN AKHBAR
04 Disember 2019 (Rabu)

AKHBAR

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The Star

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Challenges in high-rise living

Manual categorises issues usually raised by JMBs and states how to resolve them

By CHRISTINA LOW
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STRATA homeowners in Petaling Jaya are constantly battling with a host of issues and they usually involve residents living in the same building.

Often the problems goes unresolved when residents are at loggerheads with each other, disagreeing with their respective joint management board (JMB) or management corporation (MC).

"We get many complaints daily from these homeowners when they are not able to come to a mutual agreement," said Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPP) Commissioner of Buildings (COB) director Jayanthi Kupusamy, who only has a handful of staff to assist residents with such issues.

She said in Petaling Jaya alone, her team had to conduct checks on 1,252 strata schemes in the city, covering apartments, condominiums, multistorey buildings and flats.

Among the most common issues her department has dealt with are money swindling, fights between MC and residents as well as water leakage between floors.

"Although we have no power to tell the MC or JMB what to do, we (COB) can act as a mediator to help them resolve their issues amicably," she said during the launch of the *High Rise Security and Safety Manual* at Civic Centre in Petaling Jaya.

The book is written by Eric Chew, who is treasurer of Petaling Jaya-based community group MyPJ, in collaboration with the Petaling Jaya parliamentary office and Selangor housing and urban living committee.

Jayanthi said in a growing city, both the MC or JMB of more affluent strata homes are usually popular among residents as opposed to the one for lower-income groups.

"In well-to-do housing areas, everyone wants to be in the committee but in lesser-known zones where there are constant problems, no one wants to take the lead," she said, adding that fear and lack of support from neighbours were the main reasons.

While affluent areas fight over misuse of funds, others struggle to collect monthly maintenance fees and sinking fund to manage their building.

"Some of them come to us for help, asking us to take over which is something we cannot do.

"We can only enlighten them (residents) on the positive side of having a committee



Kuna advises residents to make sure that sinking fund and maintenance accounts are audited regularly.

and how it would affect them if they do not have one," she said, adding that talks and courses were subsequently organised to meet the needs of residents who were keen on learning more about managing their own building.

For instance, she said many did not know of the Strata Management Act 2013 (Act 757) and understand how it could assist them.

"If the residents need help or are looking for a government agency to explain the Act further, we are able to coordinate and even conduct free talks," explained Jayanthi.

At the event, lawyer Kuna Sekaran spoke about strata living rights and how residents can better manage their building together with their JMB or MC members.

"When the developer hands over the building to the JMB, residents need to know what they will take over," he said, adding that residents should also be aware of the building's insurance status and accounts.

Kuna advised attendees to ensure sinking fund and maintenance accounts were audited regularly.

"Without proper funds, you cannot run the building after the developer hands it over," he said.

A badly run committee, he said, could affect the building, especially if it was unable to collect the monthly fees, and this would lead to other problems, such as safety, facilities not in working order and an unfriendly neighbourhood.

"Managing the accounts of a building is very important.

"Every member needs to know the status of the account either monthly or annually so that in an emergency, the residents will know how to manage with what they have in the bank," he said.

He suggested that JMBs and MCs come up with an annual budget so residents would



Maria (centre) launching the 'High Rise Security and Safety Manual' with Seri Setia assemblyman Halimey Abu Bakar (right) and National Unity and Integration Department director Fairojbanu Zainal Abidin. — Photos: SAM THAM/The Star

know how the money was used.

Selangor housing and urban living committee chairman Haniza Talha, in her speech via video recording, said the state government had introduced the Duplikasi K-Inovasi programme to recognise creative and innovative projects by JMB and management committees in Selangor to better maintain and manage their apartments.

Among the projects that caught the attention of the state government was the Strata Recycling Centre by Pangsapuri Kenanga in Gombak Permai and the electronic payment (e-pay) system introduced by Pangsapuri Iris in Saujana Impian.

Both ideas have been introduced to 20 selected apartments within the state.

Petaling Jaya MP Maria Chin Abdullah, who was present, said the manual clearly categorised issues usually raised by JMBs and showed how they could solve them with their residents.

"Strata homeowners should also take charge of their own property and not rely on COB and the police each time they run into

financial trouble or get into a misunderstanding.

"This book serves as a guide to let them know their rights and what they can do," she said.

The manual comes in four languages and touches on security, residents, vehicles, non-residents and emergencies with a proposed by-laws guide for flats.

Chew said the idea to write the book came to him after listening to complaints from his friends who live in high-rise condominiums and flats.

"With this book, I hope to be able to help others with a starting point on how to get organised and maintain security and safety in their homes.

"They (residents) can also utilise the proposed set of by-laws as house rules or community rules as they are versatile and suitable for strata communities," he added.

Residents who want a copy can visit the Petaling Jaya parliamentary office at 18, Jalan Changgai 6/22 in Section 6, Petaling Jaya.



The 'High Rise Security and Safety Manual' touches on security, residents, vehicles, non-residents and emergencies with a proposed by-laws guide for flats. — Filepic

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Khalid bersama Nor Hisham dan Pengerusi Persatuan Penduduk Blok C, Mohd Yusoff Ibrahim (kanan) memeriksa lif ketika melawat tapak kemalangan lif di PPR Kerinchi, semalam. (Foto Intan Nur Elliana Zakaria/BH)