

'Green building' will be norm from now: Johari

By Puvaneswary Devindran

KUCHING: 'Green building' as environment friendly measure will from now on become a norm in housing estates in Sarawak.

Housing Minister Datuk Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg said the state was in the midst of incorporating environment friendly and interactive components into its housing estates especially.

He said these components would include recreational facilities like open green spaces in housing estates and the use of energy saving components like solar lights for landscape.

"Malaysia has already started and we are encouraging this in Sarawak and that's why our new housing estates are encouraged to feature environment-friendly components and also create a good layout to incorporate green living...we are following the trend now to save energy," he told reporters after launching the Building Trade Show 2009 at Permata Carpark here yesterday.

He pointed out that Sarawak had an advantage because it had the resources to do so, such as abundant solar energy and also

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Datuk Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg, Housing Minister

power from its many rivers.

He said with these resources in place, what was left to do was to bring in the technology to complement them.

Johari said architects these days were into designing buildings which were environment friendly because people were getting more and more conscious about the environment.

According to him, there was even an international benchmark for 'green' buildings, which are considered efficient buildings as they use cost-saving components.

He said there were also international bodies which would give incentives to those who used environment friendly components for their buildings.

Meanwhile, Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia president Lee Chor Wah said that PAM had started a new company, Green Building Index (GBI) Sdn Bhd, which provides training and support for facilitators and certifiers to bring the GBI to the

building industry in Malaysia.

According to Lee, the commercial building and residential building rating tools would be launched in April this year.

He said there were more than 10 new pilot projects applying to be rated by the GBI.

"Two local authorities MBPJ (Majlis Bandaraya Petaling Jaya) and DBKL (Kuala Lumpur City Hall) had given their support on this and we certainly hope to get the support to implement GBI in Sarawak as soon as possible.

"We understand that JKR (Public Works Department) has already started asking for its new buildings to be GBI certified," he said.

He conceded that Malaysia had started slow in this but that proved to be an advantage to a certain extent because it could now learn better and faster from others like Australia and Singapore.

He said that apart from these 10 pilot projects, Malaysia had

other 'green' buildings which had been certified through external gradings from agencies in the US and also Singapore.

He said that PAM foresaw a bigger task ahead if it wanted to get all buildings to go green because it had to retrofit its existing buildings with 'environment friendly components.

Lee said through Australia's experience, retrofitting existing old office buildings into a green concept, did get better rentals.

"Interestingly from Australia's example, they (building owners or developers) get better rentals because green buildings are getting more popular with companies as they have policies on corporate social responsibility.

"They want to rent green buildings because they can show their shareholders that they are responsible...so you are making more money and at the same time, saving the environment and benefitting everyone," he explained.

He cautioned, however, that having a green building required a bit more capital initially.

He said a 'green' building would allow one to save at least 10 to 20 per cent on energy consumption.