

Architects call for open tenders for all projects

KUCHING: The Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM) wants the government to hold open tenders for all projects in order to stimulate the nation's building industry.

Its president Lee Chor Wah said PAM was preparing a memorandum to be submitted to the government through the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) with open tenders as one of its recommendations.

"We reject the practice of procurement through negotiated contract and design, and build contract which had not proven to work well with their tendencies for corrupt practices," he said.

He said this yesterday during the opening of Building Trade Show 2009 at Permata Carpark Building here.

The three-day exhibition is opened for the public from March 26 to 28.

PAM also appealed to the Public Works Department (JKR) to start opening up the government projects for competition by architects as is practiced in many other countries.

"Let us begin by having one building by each ministry and department in each state to be opened to competition by all Malaysian architects," he said.

He said for some important public buildings, competition should also be open to international architects, to get the best possible design.

"We might get masterpiece architecture like the Sydney Opera House and the new Beijing Opera House which were built through international competition," said Lee.

Another aspect that the government could do was by promoting Building Information Modelling (BIM) for the construction industry, through grants or reductions in import duties on its software, he said.

"With BIM, the design and documentation time could be reduced by 30 per cent to 40 per cent while the savings in construction cost could be as high as 20 per cent," he pointed out.

To improve productivity, Lee said the Uniform Building By-Law (UBBL) "must be truly uniform", like for example, one single UBBL to be used in the country.

"We have 144 local authorities all with different submission

standards and requirements. We also have three sets of different but supposedly 'uniform' Building By-Law. It is confusing to the public as well as the profession," he pointed out.

He said these so-called uniform building by-laws must be revised.

Apart from that, Lee said PAM would publish at least three books this year - one each from its Kuala Lumpur, Sarawak and Sabah chapters.

Earlier, PAM Sarawak Chapter chairman Ng Chee Wee urged the government and developers to work together to face the current economic downturn which already had an impact on the state property market.

He said the latest statistics showed that there were over 40 per cent of unsold units in the state's housing market.

However, he added, as current interest rates were at an all time low, this could be viewed as an opportunity for potential house buyers.

He suggested that developers and financial institutions come up with creative marketing campaigns such as interest free periods, repayment holidays and other incentives to attract potential buyers.

He added that the government could play a part in helping the industry by looking into tax incentives, tax breaks and other measures for consumers.

Another way to cushion the impact of the economic slowdown was to venture into untapped market, Ng proposed.

"One large untapped market is overseas investors especially those nearby such as Singapore and Indonesia. There needs to be a concerted effort between the government and developers to promote and tap into this market," he said.

He added that PAM Sarawak Chapter would give full support and assist the government on its endeavour to promote Sarawak properties to overseas investors.

According to him, the chapter is currently working on a book on Sarawak Architecture, covering indigenous architecture and also the modern ones. The book project is supported by PAM KL through a grant from the PAM Education Fund.