

Govt reviewing building age threshold, says Nga

THE government is reviewing the proposed 30-year age threshold for buildings under the Urban Renewal Bill to ensure it better reflects technical, economic and social realities, says Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming (pic).

He said the ministry was studying the best way to set the threshold, taking into account building conditions as well as technical, economic and social factors.

Nga said this in a written reply to Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong (BN-Ayer Hitam), who asked why the ministry chose 30 years when Public Works Department standard JKR 20800:2020 stated that building structures should have a design lifespan of at least 50 years.

Nga said the 30-year figure was never meant to represent a building's full structural lifespan. Instead, it was a general indicator of when many buildings started to show signs of ageing and become less suitable for modern use.

The minister said physical deterioration depended on material, soil conditions and maintenance, while functional issues can appear within 20 to 30 years.

From an economic viewpoint, he said some buildings became uneconomical to maintain once operating and upkeep costs exceeded the market value, usually after 30 to 40 years depending on location and market conditions.



Nga said buildings aged 25 to 40 years often need major repairs, those between 40 and 60 years may require full renewal or redevelopment, and non-heritage buildings of about 70 years are usually considered outdated unless well maintained.

Inspections must be carried out by a professional engineer and submitted to the local authority.

He said existing laws already recognised the need for checks as buildings aged, adding that under Section 85A of the Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974, high-rise buildings must undergo visual and structural inspections 10 years after the Certificate of Completion and Compliance (CCC) or Certificate of Fitness is issued, and every 10 years after that.

He said the requirement for inspections every decade showed that a 50 to 60-year design lifespan alone did not guarantee safety or liveability, as these depended heavily on maintenance, management and environmental conditions.

Nga said by the time a building hits the 30-year mark, lifts, water tanks, wiring, piping and sewerage usually start to deteriorate. In poorly managed strata properties, conditions can be worse, including some less than 30 years.

He said any change to the age threshold will be made carefully to avoid unnecessary financial pressure on residents.