

Khalid: I did not approve mall

Several possible options for Ara Damansara lake, says Selangor MB

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I.M.M 97 27/11/08 MIS 9



KHALID: Residents can air their views on development

SELANGOR Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim says he did not give the green light for the development of a shopping mall at the site of a water retention area-turned-lake in Ara Damansara.

Khalid was responding to claims by Yayasan Selangor that he, as the foundation's board of trustees chairman, had given permission to developer Puncakdana Sdn Bhd to drain the lake to build a four-storey mall.

Asked about the claim yesterday, Khalid said: "There have been some discussions on that matter by the board of Yayasan Selangor. There was an arrangement whereby, during the process of privatisation, this piece of land was left there and there are various options (for its use) to be considered."

Khalid said among the options being considered were to develop the area, or turn it into an open field.

Several people had also made offers to Yayasan Selangor to purchase the land for their own development purposes.

Asked whether the land would definitely be turned into a mall, he replied that the Yayasan Selangor board had yet to consider the options and that he had not approved the development of a mall there.

He said as the landowner, Yayasan Selangor must continue to monitor the condition of the site and

not leave it as it is.

"That means the board (of trustees) should not be very comfortable to see land owned by a State corporation not being taken care of, and that includes ensuring the grass is cut, the area is well fenced and so forth."

Khalid felt the public began to grow apprehensive that something was being planned once they noticed workers "cleaning the lake".

Malay Mail had reported that the neighbouring Puncak Nusa Kelana Condominium residents noticed in May that water was being drained from the lake. They claimed it was only after their complaints that they were informed by the Petaling Jaya City Council of the development of a mall at the site.

Puncakdana had later stated the proposed mall, a joint venture between it and Yayasan Selangor, received the council's approval in 1998 — before both the condominium and

"lake" came into being.

Residents, on the other hand, are irked they were never consulted when the developer renewed its development permit. They want the lake to be preserved and the area turned into a recreational hub.

Khalid was supportive of their suggestion.

"That is all right," he said yesterday, stressing that residents could air their views on how the development would affect their daily life.

"What is more important in this exercise is that wherever there is development that has to deal with neighbouring residents, town hall gatherings must be held for the people to present their views on the way the development can affect their daily lives."

The residents are frustrated over the city council's delay in providing them with minutes of the Nov 13 meeting held on the development proposal that involved all the interested parties in the area.