

BURMAH SQUARE MEGA DEVELOPMENT

PENANG GOVT TO CONSIDER APPEALS, VIEWS

Project not approved yet, PDC has only submitted an application for planning permission

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THE state government, through the Penang Development Corporation (PDC), will consider all views and appeals on the Burmah Square mega development.

Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said as of now, the project had yet to begin.

"If the project kicks off, it will only be in 2024 or 2025.

"Right now it has yet to be approved. PDC has only submitted an application for planning per-



Chow Kon Yeow

mission to the Penang Island City Council.

"It is one of the requirements in law that before any project can proceed, the neighbouring units must be informed about it. In the case of Burmah Square, that process is still ongoing," he told newsmen when asked about objections against the project.

Elaborating, Chow said PDC had met with tenants in Burmah Square and even considered extending their tenancy agree-



The proposed development of Burmah Square will see more than half of the pre-war government quarters from the 1920s flattened and replaced with two tower blocks. PIC BY DANIAL SAAD

ments and offered them rental discounts.

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The land on which the buildings are currently standing belongs to state-owned PDC.

The PDC had revitalised Burmah Square in the 1990s, renting the pre-war houses there to interested businesses.

The 1.5ha area is surrounded by Jalan Burmah, Jalan Chow Thye, Jalan Irrawady and Jalan Servis.

Recently, a couple who own a heritage bungalow at Jalan Chow Thye sued the Penang government over concerns that development plans for Burmah Square

would pose serious risks to their home and others down the road.

Chow acknowledged the legal suit.

On the status of Category II heritage buildings within Burmah Square, Chow said there were strict guidelines which needed to be adhered to for development involving such structures.

"For example, the facade of the structure must be maintained but the back portion can be redeveloped," he added.

On the absence of a local plan, Chow said any development was still bound by the State Structure Plan and other guidelines.

"There are still controls in place such as density, plot ratio and others," he added.

The Citizens Awareness Chant Group (Chant) was reported to

have said that it had been 14 years since the DAP-led Penang government came into power, yet there was no sign of a definite local plan for the island.

A local plan would be able to dictate what can or cannot be built in a particular area.

Chant adviser Yan Lee had said in the absence of a local plan for Penang island, people of the state now saw development that they were not supposed to.

He had pointed out that one example was the Burmah Square here, where part of the pre-war houses were set to make way for skyscrapers.

On Wednesday, the Penang Heritage Trust joined the chorus urging the Penang government to revisit the development plans for Burmah Square.