

Developers: Proposals on environment law unfair

NST 8/6/06

KUALA LUMPUR: Developers have not reacted too well to the fact that they might be jailed if their projects damage the environment or trigger landslides or other disasters.

They are also none too happy with the proposal to require an environmental impact assessment (EIA) report regardless of the size of the development.

Environmental groups, however, lauded the two proposed amendments to the Environmental Quality Act 1974.

Calling it an "overreaction", Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association (Rehda) president Datuk Jeffrey Ng said the blanket requirement for an EIA would add bureaucratic processes, increase costs and defeat the Government's efforts to improve its

public delivery system.

"Rehda maintains that only large developments of 50ha or more, and all environmentally-sensitive areas irrespective of size, should be subject to EIA requirements," he said yesterday, adding that Rehda was of the view that existing laws should be tightened.

"Putting the blame solely on developers for all environmental disasters is grossly unfair and unreasonable."

Environmental groups threw their full support behind the proposed amendments to the Act.

Malaysian Nature Society executive director Dr Loh Chi Leong was pleased that some of its recommendations on the Act had been adopted.

"Areas designated as Environmental Sensitive Areas un-

der the National Physical Plan should require a mandatory detailed EIA," he added.

The Sabah Environmental Protection Association said any amendment to the Act should consider how long developers and consultants could be held responsible for damage to the environment.

"Rising land prices and motivation for profit often drive developers to go for high-density development on small plots."

On Tuesday, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid said following the amendments expected to be completed by the end of the year, developers and consultants would have to bear responsibility for any ensuing environmental problems.