

Heritage Department awaiting DBKL's input on partially hacked old wall

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THE National Heritage Department (JWN) has sought clarification from Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) on the recent partial demolition of a 110-year-old wall along Lebuhr Pasar Besar.

Heritage commissioner Dr Zainah Ibrahim said they were still awaiting feedback and would discuss solutions to the issue with City Hall.

She said JWN had stipulated several conditions that had to be met by the developers, but these had not been complied with.

"The department was neither informed nor consulted of the demolition beforehand.

"We made a site visit on July 27 and on the same day, a meeting was called between the developers and DBKL. In the meantime, all work on the wall has been stopped.

"We have also asked the developers to ensure that all the old bricks are salvaged for reconstruction," she said in a statement.

She said even if a structure with heritage value was not listed under the National Heritage Act (NHA) 2005 (Act 645), local authorities could refer to the department

to identify the best conservation method for it.

"In accordance with the requirements of Act 645 (Section 40), when there is any new development site close to a national heritage structure or structure of heritage value, recommendations should be submitted to JWN.

"JWN will then identify measures which should be taken to ensure the new development will not affect the integrity or legacy of the structure.

"Some of the measures that we stress on are providing Dilapidation Studies and Measured Drawings, appointing a JWN-recognised conservator to advise the developer on documentation related to the preparation and work procedures involved.

"The developer will also have to submit proposed safety and work procedures to ensure the integrity of the heritage structure is maintained and at the same time to preserve the authenticity of the building structure," she explained.

She added that close cooperation between local authorities and participating agencies was essential to ensure the best overall conservation of national heritage.

It was recently reported that the 15m wall, located in front of the

AgroBank Malaysia headquarters in Lebuhr Pasar Besar, had a section hacked into it by construction workers working on a nearby building.

The wall was kept in memory of the history of the place as the Federated Malay States Railway and Yard, which was built in 1905.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Institute of Architects Malaysia (PAM) is calling for the preservation of the wall.

PAM Heritage and Conservation Committee chairman Steven Thang Boon Ann said they were appalled by the destruction of a heritage monument.

"Such destruction without regard to our inheritance exhibits further threat to our built heritage.

"The wall is located among grand buildings and forms an integral extension from the National Textile Museum, which was the railway headquarters," he said in a statement.

"The wall does not appear to have caused any hindrance to developments in the vicinity and should have been incorporated in all development proposals," he said.

Thang added that any development of any scale or design adja-

cent to or close to a Listed Building, which would have a major adverse impact on the Listed Building, should be strongly discouraged, as provided in the NHA 2005.

"Our city was developed from a historical fabric; it gives us a sense of pride, achievement and belonging, a story that can be told to generations to come including visitors to our city.

"We built our city around these monuments and national celebrations are held around them. Without them, the city would be soulless and without any identity.

"All physical acts to these monuments should have the participation of the stakeholders of the city. There is not much built heritage left and with such destruction and elimination, we would live with regret and shame," he said.

He added that PAM was disappointed that the professionals appointed for the project had been insensitive to the historic environment.

"We request that DBKL exercise their social responsibility by preserving all monuments and the built heritage that is in Kuala Lumpur. We have almost lost the intangible but let us not lose the tangible," Thang said.