

Amendments to building by-laws needed for full IBS adoption, say builders

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KUALA LUMPUR (Aug 18): The Master Builders Association Malaysia (MBAM) said amendments need to be made to the Uniform Building By-Laws (UBBL) before the government can impose the mandatory usage of industrialised building system (IBS), in order to make IBS construction more economical.

MBAM honorary adviser and past president Datuk Ng Kee Leen said the UBBL covers the standards for the measurements of building parts.

Currently, each local authority has its own standards under the UBBL, making it a hassle to construct using the IBS method as suppliers will have to manufacture different components based on the requirements of different localities.

"Every local council has their own UBBL, with different measurement standards. Since IBS has standard sized panels and components, they (the authorities) will need to change the law to follow one standard," he said at a press conference following the MBAM Affiliate Dialogue 2017 earlier today.

Ng said this has been in discussion over the past decade or so, but no significant developments have been made.

MBAM president Foo Chek Lee said standardisation of the requirements will be important to achieve economies of scale in the usage of IBS components.

"Since IBS uses standard-sized panels and all that, they will need to amend the law to follow one standard. Basically it goes back to the economies of scale.

"If everything follows the same standards of measurement, it will be easier and more economical to build. On the other hand, it will not be economical to manufacture IBS components if different localities enforce different standards," he said.

Meanwhile, MBAM secretary-general Dennis Tan Soo Huang cited the example of Singapore, which has been leading the Asean region in IBS usage. He said the uniform standards used in the island state have made it easier to use IBS.

"This is one of the reasons why Singapore has been so successful in their implementation of IBS in their construction sector. They enforce the same standards across the board, making it easier to meet the requirements," he said.

Besides the change in guidelines, Foo said the slow rate of adoption of IBS in Malaysia is also due to manpower issues, on shortage of skilled local workers.

He said MBAM has taken steps to address this by providing training for IBS valuers and supervisors.

"We need to train more skilled workers for the implementation of IBS, not only in terms of installation but also design and manufacturing systems. Unless this is done, we may find some hiccups in the implementation of IBS," he said.

Another issue is the costs of heavy lifting equipment — needed to support construction using IBS components — which Foo said is expensive at the moment.

"The existing equipment we are using now is not sufficient to cater for IBS components and the cost of procurement is quite high at the moment.

"The government should look into how they can lower the tax on these equipments to encourage the adoption of IBS in the local industry," he added.