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Klang Valley's Muslim cemeteries are approaching maximum capacity

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PETALING JAYA: A plan to have multi-level graves has been approved to ensure ample space for Muslim burials in the densely populated Klang Valley, but authorities are treading cautiously to protect sensitivities, says Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) Datuk Dr Mohd Na'im Mokhtar.

"The demand for Muslim burials is increasing year by year. If no proactive efforts are made to expand or improve cemetery management, we risk facing a shortage of burial sites in the near future."

"Major cemeteries are approaching maximum capacity," he said when contacted.

Mohd Na'im added that multi-level graves were among the resolutions passed at last year's Convention on the Transformation of Islamic Cemeteries and Funeral Engagement.

"Multi-level graves are not something new. They have already been implemented in countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Singapore."



Planning for future: Mohd Na'im (left) and Mohd Uzir.

"Within Malaysia, states like Kedah and Penang have also started adopting this approach," he said.

However, he said implementation in the Klang Valley requires an in-depth review from religious authorities, besides the need to look into technical aspects, seek community engagement to address sensitivities and to weigh legal considerations.

"Any innovation, such as multi-level graves, will not be implemented hastily without thorough research and proper preparation," he said.

He said a pilot study is being conducted under the supervision of agencies such as the Federal Territories Islamic Religious Department (Jawi).

"If all technical and syariah approvals are obtained, the initial implementation phase is expected to begin within two to three years at several strategic locations in the Federal Territories that have been identified," he said, while declining to reveal these locations.

He said training and certification will be coordinated by the Department of Islamic Develop-



ment Malaysia (Jakim) in collaboration with respective state Islamic religious departments.

"This includes technical training on multi-level burial procedures, courses on managing deceased remains within structured burial spaces, exposure to safety and syariah compliance, as well as planning for modern and systematic cemetery landscape design," he said.

Mohd Na'im pointed out that authorities such as the National Fatwa Council and the Selangor Mufti Department view multi-level burials as permissible under certain conditions.

"It is permissible when there is insufficient horizontal land available, the deceased are treated with dignity and not desecrated, and when Islamic burial rites and etiquette are upheld."

"Several states are currently reviewing this matter thoroughly through fatwa discussions," he added.

He also said the government

had outlined other strategies to ensure ample burial land for Muslims such as opening new cemetery areas on the outskirts of cities, such as in Semenyih.

Selangor Mufti Datuk Dr Anhar Opir, when contacted, said Selangor religious authorities had gazetted a fatwa in 2004 that allowed for multi-level graves in the state.

"However, multi-level graves have yet to be implemented in Selangor. The matter is still in discussion," said Anhar.

Chief statistician Datuk Seri Mohd Uzir Mahidin said there are currently 23 Muslim burial plots in Kuala Lumpur, with 15 having available lots.

Eight cemeteries have been fully taken up.

On cemeteries in Putrajaya, Mohd Uzir said a case study found that there are enough graves for the next five years.

He said the site, located at Taman Selatan in Precinct 20, Putrajaya, incorporates cemeteries for Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Christians.

He said phase 2 of the cemetery is expected to be completed by mid-2028, comprising 5.42ha. The total amount of land there is 41.68ha.