

'WFH not influencing property buys'

SHIVANI SUPRAMANI(/TAG/-/META/SHIVANI-SUPRAMANI) / 03 FEB 2021 / 10:05 H.



Bernamapix

PETALING JAYA: The trend of buying properties on the outskirts of towns and cities is not new and the current uptick in sales may be influenced by factors other than the work-from-home (WFH) concept, property experts said.

President of the Association of Valuers and Property Consultants in Private Practice, Michael Kong, said the trend was prevalent even before the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I do not believe it is due to movement restrictions and the WFH culture," he told *theSun*.

"WFH may be a temporary phenomenon due to the pandemic and when things return to normal, I expect the working environment to also return to normalcy, albeit at a reduced pace. Humans are by nature social creatures and need interaction, exchange of ideas and direct communication."

Kong added the bigger picture is affordability rather than WFH regulations. "Housing prices within central areas have become too exorbitant and out of reach of general buyers."

Kong added that lifestyle choices also play a role, with people wanting cleaner air, beautiful and greener scenery, and less congestion.

Prices of houses are also beginning to adjust due to demand and supply, he said.

“The pandemic has caused tremendous stress both in the primary as well as the secondary markets. I believe property prices are slowly declining and will come to an equilibrium soon.”

Former president of the Malaysian Chapter of the International Real Estate Federation, Yeow Thit Sang, said while there may be advantages such as affordability when buying a property on the outskirts, disadvantages outweigh the plus points.

“People assume that buying properties on the outskirts of towns may save them some money because land prices are cheaper, but what they fail to understand is that transportation costs will increase after the pandemic and when companies require people to work from offices.”

He added that unlike countries such as Australia and New Zealand, where many people live far away from workplaces, Malaysia does not have proper public transportation as those countries do.

He believes that while there is a shift in demand towards properties in suburban areas, there will not be much of a difference in costs.

The comments were in response to a study conducted by iProperty that found an increase in property sales on the outskirts and a decrease in demand in cities.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said the only reason the WFH concept is so widespread today is because of the pandemic and movement restrictions.

Shamsuddin added this concept may remain as part of the new norm post Covid-19.

“While there are some employers who will require their employees to work on site, there are also those who look at this regulation as a benefit. Employers who have had their office spaces reduced during the pandemic will most probably continue to ask staff to work from home.”