Neighbours see red over giant house

By JOY FANG

IT HAS been called a “bulking monster” by those living in a sleepy private housing estate in Simei. Many residents fear that the massive structure being built in their midst could end up housing foreign workers. Irrited, some are even thinking of moving out.

The structure in question is a three-storey building with an attic currently being built in Jalan Angin Laut. Construction began last August and is slated for completion within two months.

Residents say the building dwarfs the surrounding houses and ruins the aesthetic appeal of the estate. The building will have a pool and more than 10 rooms, each with an attached bathroom.

When my paper visited the area, the building, located at unit 17A, looked about two thirds done. Standing at a height of 16.5m and with a length of 40m, it towers over its adjacent one-storey neighbour.

my paper understands that a one-storey semi-detached house used to stand in its place.

When contacted, the building’s main contractor, Mr Anthony Ang, said the project costs more than $2 million and complies with all guidelines.

Written permission from the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and approval from the Building and Construction Authority were sought before construction started, he added.

A URA spokesman said approval was given because the development proposal for the house “met our planning guidelines and parameters”.

Jalan Angin Laut is located in a “mixed landed housing area”, the spokesman explained. This means that any form of landed housing – terrace houses, semi-detached and detached houses – may be built there. Existing houses may be redeveloped into other forms of housing, subject to parameters such as the plot’s size and width, said the spokesman.

my paper understands that the house is being built for a large family.

A resident living nearby, who wanted to be known only as Mr Ang, said: “The building is too huge and takes up almost all the available land.

“A lot of people here are very unhappy. The neighbours can’t even see the sky.”

Jalan Angin Laut is located in Simei, said Mr Ang. “The authorities, he added, should be more sensitive, consulting and engaging residents before approving submissions.

Another resident, who has lived in the area for 20 years, said: “We toyed with the idea of moving... but we’ll see how it goes.

However, some are blase about the building.

“There’s nothing we can do if they want to build it. They bought the land and they own the space, so they can do whatever they want with it,” said a resident who wanted to be known only as Mr Ho.

Mr J. A. Goh, a senior marketing director from ERA Realty Network, said the value of the houses directly next door will be “pressed down by potential buyers”, as they will use the building as a reason for negotiating lower prices.

“Buyers will say that the surrounding area is blocked and that there is no sunlight, so they will not accept offers at the market rate, he said.

joyfang@sp.com.sg

Buangkok residents get taste of water rationing

By GERARD LAI

SOME 130 households in Compassvale Row’s Housing Board flats in Buangkok got a taste of how water rationing is done in times of crisis.

They were involved in the first water-distribution exercise held yesterday in Punggol South Constituency to remind residents of the importance of preparing for peacetime emergencies, such as a sudden shortage of water.

Residents also witnessed fire-fighting demonstrations by the Singapore Civil Defence Force.

A pilot programme was organised by Punggol Coris Residents’ Committee and Punggol South Community Emergency and Engagement Committee.

A Member of Parliament (MP) for Pasir Ris-Punggol Group Representation Constituency (GRC), Mr Gan Thiam Poh, said: “Many of us have forgotten that Singapore faced water shortages back in the 1960s.”

However, the importance of quantifying how much water is kept underground may not be lost on the older generation who have experienced such situations, he said.

The event’s guest of honour, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, said: “In the earlier days, we knew how to prepare for emergencies.”

Mr Teo is also an MP in the GRC. He recalled a time when he was of primary-school age, and his father took him to MacRitchie Reservoir. It was during a dry period when “it had not rained for several months”.

He said he was shocked to find only mud instead of water, likening the area to “some place in Africa where it has not rained for several months”.

“It drove home (the message of) how important it is to be prepared for any kind of emergency,” he said.

Mr Teo added that, during his childhood, his household always had an earthenware urn “kept full of water, in case the water runs out”.

He stressed: “The purpose of today’s exercise (is) to imagine what might happen if there’s no water, or if there’s a fire...and to make sure we can survive and our friends and neighbours will also be okay.”

gerrard@sp.com.sg

IF WATER’S LACKING: Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean looking on as Buangkok residents in Punggol South take part in a water-distribution exercise. (PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN)