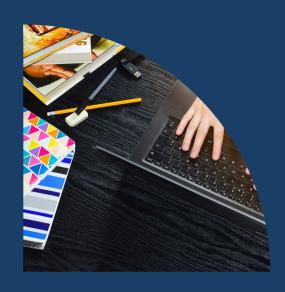
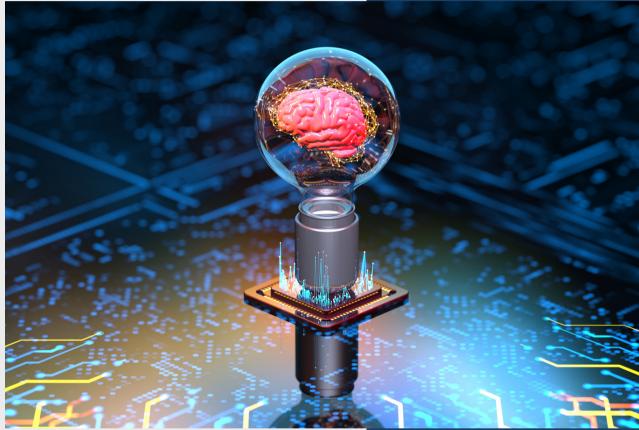
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WAQF LAND MANAGEMENT FOR PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT: A CATALYST FOR WELFARE AND BENEFITS TO THE POOR

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INTRODUCTION

Waqf, also spelt as wakf or waqaf, is an Islamic law concept that involves the endowment or dedication of a specific asset or property, usually in the form of real estate, for religious, charitable, or philanthropic purposes. The person who creates a waqf is known as a "waqif" or "donor". The properties or assets dedicated to waqf become the waqf's corpus and any income generated from it is used to support the intended charitable or religious cause. As an Islamic philanthropic, waqf holds a unique position in the socio-economic fabric of Muslim societies. Traditionally, waqf has been associated with the dedication of assets, including land, for charitable and welfare purposes; however, the focus has recently shifted towards exploring the economic potential of waqf lands through property development with the aim of generating sustainable revenue streams for the benefit of the underprivileged.

WAQF: A CATALYST FOR WELFARE AND BENEFITS TO THE POOR

To understand the contemporary implications of waqf land management, it is imperative to dive into its historical foundations. Rooted in Islamic principles, waqf has historically been a mechanism for addressing societal needs (Shaikh et al., 2017). Lands endowed through waqf were traditionally utilised for the establishment of schools, hospitals, and other charitable institutions. The evolution of waqf over time has seen a shift in emphasis from mere sustenance to a more dynamic approach, encompassing economic development and self-sustainability. In the modern era, the management of waqf lands has encountered diverse challenges, ranging from legal intricacies to the need for adaptive governance structures. This is in line with a study by Hashim et al. (2013) that revealed the methods employed by Majlis Agama Pulau Pinang (MAINPP) and UDA Holding Bhd to commercially develop a waqf land in Seberang Jaya, Pulau Pinang. The utilisation of waqf lands for property development emerges as a viable solution to these challenges. By engaging in strategic real estate projects, waqf institutions can not only preserve the endowed capital but also enhance its value, subsequently creating a sustainable source of income for charitable activities.

The efficient management of waqf lands involves the development of sustainable economic activities. Property development on waqf lands can encompass residential, commercial, or industrial projects, thereby creating a diversified portfolio that generates revenue. The profits generated from these developments can then be channelled back into charitable initiatives, addressing societal needs and providing direct benefits to the poor. Furthermore, the development of properties on waqf lands may include affordable housing projects, hence addressing the acute shortage of housing for the economically disadvantaged. By constructing low-cost housing units, waqf properties can serve as a means to provide shelter to those who are marginalised and lack adequate housing.

The property development on waqf lands can also create job opportunities for the local population. This economic empowerment, coupled with skill development programs, can elevate communities out of poverty while fostering self-sufficiency and resilience. Waqf funds generated from property development can be utilised to establish or enhance educational institutions, such as schools, colleges, and vocational training centres. Such initiative will provide the underprivileged with access to quality education, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty through knowledge and skills development. Moreover, waqf land management can contribute to the establishment and maintenance of healthcare facilities. Hospitals, clinics, and medical centres can be constructed to provide affordable and accessible healthcare services to the poor, ultimately improving their overall well-being.

While the potential benefits of waqf land management for property development are substantial, challenges such as legal complexities, insufficient governance, and resistance to change may impede progress (Mohamad, 2022). Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort from religious leaders, legal authorities, and community stakeholders to establish transparent governance structures, streamline legal processes, and promote awareness about the positive impact of waqf land utilisation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the strategic management and development of waqf lands for property development represent a potent tool for promoting welfare and benefiting the poor. By embracing this approach, societies can unlock the economic potential of waqf properties and channel resources into initiatives that will uplift the underprivileged. With thoughtful planning, transparent governance, and community involvement, waqf land management can serve as a catalyst for sustainable development, creating a positive impact on the lives of those in need.

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