

Giving urban poor a better deal

NST 13 APR 1982

PENANG, Mon. — The Government will provide modern settlements for the urban poor so that they can also enjoy the facilities provided in towns, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the poor too had the right to stay in towns and enjoy the better conditions which were unavailable in the rural areas.

High demand

"It cannot be denied that there are better schools, better hospitals and other facilities in the towns as there is a higher concentration of population there," he said at the launching of the Jalan Kedah urban renewal project here.

"The towns are not just for the wealthy but for the poor as well," he added.

The project covering 14.2 hectares, will have 304 units of houses and shops when it is completed.

Among those who were also present were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, Chief Minister Dr Lim Chong Eu, Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and senior State government officials.

Previously the Prime Minister said due to the high demand for land many people had sold their plots and moved out to the suburbs or the rural areas.

He said this had happened to many bumiputras here, in Kuala Lumpur and other big towns.

"This trend has to be stopped and development must be planned so that the poor instead of being evicted, can stay in town and earn their living in towns," he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the modern settlements were also necessary to accommodate those who had migrated from the rural areas to seek better life in the cities and

towns.

Left on their own, he said, these people would have to live in squalor in squatter settlements.

He said due to the high price of land in the urban centres the housing provided could not be like the "kampung houses" as the land had to be economically utilised.

"However, the basic amenities like lighting and water will be provided," he said.

The Prime Minister said the people who occupy these houses would also be provided with facilities to conduct their trade.

He said those who have improved their stations in life would move to better houses so that their places could be taken over by the poor people.

"This they will have to do as even though the poor will not have to pay for these projects, nothing is free in this world," he said.