

Can be shares, savings or houses PM: Property ownership policy to go on

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JOHORE BARU, Fri. — Malaysia will continue to practise a property-owning democracy, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the term should not be confused with "house-owning democracy."

The aim of a property-owning policy, he said, was to enable each citizen to own property in one form or another — shares, savings or houses.

"The harder a person works, the more property he will be able to own," he said.

The Malaysian concept was different from the socialist or communist interpretation of property ownership, he said at the opening of an exhibition of model houses constructed by the winners and selected participants of the recent Johore Low-Cost Housing Design and Construction Competition.

He presented awards and certificates to the winners — Konsortium Malaysia/Syarikat Chin Swee En-

terprise Sdn Bhd and Tajo Bricks Sdn Bhd.

Dr Mahathir said although the Government encouraged Malaysians to own houses, it would not be practical to ensure that everyone did.

"There is no country in the world where each of its citizens owns a home," he said.

"That is not practical. There will be people owning a house, two houses or even 10 houses. Those who do not have houses may have to rent from others.

Flat dwellers

"The important thing is that they have a roof over their heads."

On low-cost housing, he reminded prospective house buyers that the Johore competition was based on construction cost and did not take into account the cost of infrastructure and land.

Konsortium Malaysia/Syarikat

Chin Swee won in the \$5,000 construction cost category and Tajo Bricks in the \$12,000 construction cost category.

The Prime Minister called on Malaysians to adapt to changes, saying it was not possible to live in urban centres as if they were kampungs.

"It would be impractical to want a garden in a flat," he said in a light-hearted vein. "And in a flat, there is no back door like in a kampung house. One cannot run away from one's creditor through the back door."

Also, he added, it would be impossible for a flat dweller to maintain the Malay tradition of having women enter the house through the back door.

He also noted complaints from flat dwellers that lifts were not big enough for taking down bodies for burial, that the dead would have to travel down standing up.

It's not practical to have lifts as big as the ones in hospitals," he said. People will have to constantly adjust to their environment, he said.

"In the kampung, a person can put up a staircase of rounded timber. With time, he is able to use it properly, without accidents.

"One day the kampung man becomes sick and a doctor comes to attend to him. Not used to the staircase and with his socks on, the doctor has trouble using it. But in time, the doctor also learns to adjust to the situation and he does not fall anymore."

The Prime Minister was on a one-day visit here.