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Acting PM visits site of delayed housing project

PENANG, Sat. - Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today visited Halaman Damai in Georgetown, one of several delayed housing projects in the State by developer Duniaga Sdn Bhd.

The project's low-cost block has been completed and occupied. However, residents of a second block of medium-cost units are still waiting for the certificate of fitness while a third block of medium-cost units is under construction.

Housebuyers of Halaman Damai in Kampung Nyak Puteh, Georgetown were told when they signed their sales and purchase agreements in 1992 that the project would be completed in 1995.

They have for the past two to three years been servicing their bank loans while burdened at the same time with paying rental on their present homes and supporting their families.

Buyers such as shipping clerks Abdul Razak Abdul Rahman, 49, Mohd Johari Mohd Arif, 35, and Faizul Mohamad, 37, have eagerly awaited Anwar's visit to air their grouses.

Abdul Razak said the monthly repayment on his housing loan is RM307 and the house he currently rents at Jalan Tunku cost RM350 per month. Faizul pays RM400 for renting a Nusantara flat and another RM517 to repay his loan every month.

Mohd Johari took a RM52,000 housing loan. The bank had released RM40,000 to Duniaga and now he owes the bank an accumulated RM8,000 in interest on the sum released.

"My monthly salary is RM1,000 and RM350 goes to pay for my house rental in Kampung Melayu and the rest to support my family. I can't afford to pay the loan interest," he said.

Similar grievances were expressed by buyers of other Duniaga projects. The New Straits Times today highlighted complaints by purchasers of the abandoned Sri Bayu project in Bayan Lepas.

Anwar, who had launched Sri Bayu in 1992, said the State Bumiputera Steering Committee, at its meeting two months ago, decided to look for a new developer to continue with the project.

A Duniaga spokesman, who declined to be named, told reporters at the Halaman Damai site today that Halaman Damai and Sri Bayu actually formed the package A and package B, respectively, of the same project.

He said the company is 100 per cent owned by Bumiputeras. It was formed in 1975 with UDA Holding Sdn Bhd having 35 per cent share of Duniaga till 1978.

A press report last December named one Idris Abdul Ghani as its general manager while another report in April last year named one K.B. Teoh as the general manager.

Duniaga is a Penang-based company. It has two other problem-riddled projects on the mainland.

Its Desa Damai shophouse project in Bukit Mertajam has yet to be issued CFs although the purchasers had paid up to 90 per cent of the price over the past 10 years. The matter was highlighted when Bukit Mertajam MP Dr Tan Chong Keng visited the project earlier this month.

Its Taman Desa Jawi project in Nibong Tebal, launched in 1986, comprises 156 terrace and cluster houses and shophouses but remain uncompleted to this day.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Mohd Shariff Omar who visited the site last

month gave the developer three months to complete phase four of the project or face the consequences.

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