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Ting: Complete checks on riverine settlements quickly

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - State Governments should complete checking the safety of houses located along river banks as soon as possible, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh said today.

"The faster they finish their checks, the faster we can commence discussions on where we can relocate the settlers," he said after receiving a delegation headed by the Governor of Hubei province in China, Wang Chung Nung.

The 25-member delegation is on a three-day visit to Malaysia to learn more about the country's development in town planning and housing.

Ting said some State Governments might take a longer time than others to complete the checks because of the size of their States.

"Some of the settlements are also located in the interior. This may impede those conducting checks."

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had on Jan 4 called on State Governments to ban the construction of buildings along river banks and also to resettle the residents to safer areas.

Following the call, Ting directed that checks be made on the safety of buildings and houses located along river banks and on hill slopes and mining land.

He said tragedies such as the one in Keningau recently and the collapse of the Highland Towers apartments in Hulu Klang three years ago could have been averted if periodic checks had been carried out by the authorities.

Ting said he was pleased that all State Governments were taking the task seriously.

Asked what action would be taken if settlers refused to move after being told that their houses were unsafe, Ting said in cases where the land was owned by them (settlers), all the State Governments could do was to advise them.

On his meeting with the Hubei delegation, Ting said they were impressed with the development in the country.

"They said they would come to Malaysia periodically so they can learn from us in terms of town planning and housing."

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