

07/08/1998

96 seek RM7.3bn in loans to build low-cost homes

Kamarul Yunus

SYARIKAT Perumahan Negara (SPN), the national housing agency which was set up to foresee the development of affordable houses, has so far received a total of 96 applications for loans amounting to RM7.3 billion, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said yesterday.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, said however that the Government could not accommodate all applications as it currently has only about RM1.81 billion in funds that can be used as bridging loans for the developers.

"This is the amount that we are capable of giving to the developers.

"We cannot afford to provide more than this.

"Wherever we can, we will try to implement some of the projects, especially houses for the public and low- and medium-cost houses," he said at the signing of the memoranda of understanding for RM165 million in bridging finance between Bukit Cerakah Development Sdn Bhd and six financial institutions at Puncak Alam, near Kapar, Selangor yesterday.

The bridging finance is for the development of affordable houses, priced RM150,000 and below in Puncak Alam.

The six financial institutions which serve as trustees for the loans from SPN are Public Bank, Southern Bank, Perwira Affin Bank, Bank of Commerce, Standard Chartered Bank and Arab Malaysian Finance Bhd.

Under the scheme, the financial institutions will make payments directly to the contractors with the loans taken by the developer.

The quantum of payments will correspond with the phases of work done by the contractors.

Anwar also commended Bank Negara Malaysia and SPN for coordinating the special RM2 billion fund for affordable houses.

Anwar launched SPN on October 9 last year.

The agency has an initial capital of RM2 billion for the development of affordable houses.

To ensure such projects are implemented effectively and immediately, Anwar said the Government has directed its agencies and department to speed up the process and approval of the priority projects.

"We should make sure that the projects, which had been approved with a certain amount of funds, be implemented immediately ... We should not delay or follow the old module or practices.

"We have to speed it up due to the present economic problems.

"If we delay the implementation of projects that stimulate economic growth, we will not be able to speed up the country's economic recovery.

"Instead, if we work fast and diligently, we will be able to recover quickly," he added.

He also noted that the Government has taken a new approach, with officials of both federal and state governments going down to the ground to check if the projects are being implemented immediately as directed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"We will try to resolve any problems as soon as we hear complaints, even if the project is a minor one," he said.

"It may be a small project to us but for the rural folks, this is considered an important and big project for them. So, it is wise for us to look into the problems and help solve them," he added.

Later, Anwar also launched the Puncak Alam's "Rumah Alam Malaysia", a series of apartment and terrace houses, priced between RM35,000 and

RM90,000 which are part of Puncak Alam's RM2 billion suburban township development. Bukit Cerakah Development is the developer of the project.

Meanwhile, Bukit Cerakah Development executive chairman Datuk Rozali Ismail said the company expects encouraging response from the public for its "Rumah Alam Malaysia" houses.

"Our initial 3,600 units of such houses were sold out within days when we started to sell them," he said.

(END)