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Dr M: We need peace for progress

Ramlan Said; Sarban Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government will not be able to help the people if there is no peace in the country.

When there was peace, it would be the people who would benefit as the Government could concentrate on developing the country.

"That's why it is important for us to ensure long-lasting peace in the country ... such a situation will attract investment, more jobs will be created for the people, higher wages and there would be plenty of business opportunities."

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a ceremony today to hand over keys to buyers of low-cost houses at the Taman Bunga Raya project at Bukit Beruntung.

It was the intention of the Government to help the people but it would not be able to do so if there were disturbances and riots.

Dr Mahathir said those who bought units at the project would benefit as their properties would appreciate in the future.

"I am confident that in 10 to 15 years, the value of these RM25,000 units will increase many times. So, actually, you are making a profitable investment."

He alluded to cases of Felda settlers who became millionaires after selling land bought at only RM50,000 many years ago.

The Prime Minister also advised buyers to keep their houses and surroundings clean and attractive, stressing that the old lifestyle like drying clothes on windows in front of the houses must be changed.

As people of a developing country, they should opt for a lifestyle which was more comfortable.

At a Press conference later, Dr Mahathir said the Government would build low-cost houses for rent in the Federal Territory.

However, they would not be of the RM25,000 type, considering their location in the city centre.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was still not satisfied with the construction of houses especially for the low-income group.

At the ceremony, Dr Mahathir presented a mock key to 10 buyers representing the 2,935 buyers in the project.

The Prime Minister also launched the Mawar Apartment, another project by the Emkay Group of Companies and a fresh fish kiosk and launderette.

The kiosk, run by Fisherman's Best Sdn Bhd, is a joint venture between Jurumuda Sdn Bhd and Majuikan Sdn bhd. The launderette is owned by Jurumuda, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Edaran Otomobil Nasional.

Emkay, which has been in the property development business for the last 16 years, has built 11,600 housing units of various types with total sales of about RM825 million. It hopes to launch another 10,000 units this year with sales estimated at RM1 billion.

In Taman Bunga Raya alone, the company has sold 5,898 houses valued at RM235 million of which 3,594 were low-cost units.

Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar congratulated the company for completing the housing project ahead of schedule.

"Other developers must emulate Emkay which has managed to complete this project ahead of schedule despite the unfavourable economic conditions."

The State Government had signed an agreement with Emkay in 1995 to build 50,000 low cost homes in the State under a cross-subsidisation scheme to meet the demand for low-cost units.

Emkay executive chairman Datuk Mustapha Kamal Abu Bakar said the company had managed to undertake the Taman Bunga Raya project as it was also carrying out several other projects elsewhere.

Among these are the Damansara Damai project in Sungai Buloh (Petaling district), Damansara Perdana (Petaling Jaya), Bukit Merah Laketown (Taiping, Perak), Langkawi Lagoon (Langkawi) and Cyberia (Cyberjaya). These ventures had allowed it to "cross-subsidise" its low-cost and affordable housing projects.

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