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Finish jobs quickly to save costs, builders told

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IPOH, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today development projects, including housing schemes, must be completed in the shortest possible time to save costs.

The Prime Minister said it was necessary to consider the time factor so that everyone would value time or costs would increase.

"If we can build something speedily, it would be good even for business," he said, adding that delayed projects like housing would only cause problems and hardship to buyers.

"However, if projects can be completed early, developers too would reap more profits," he said when launching the Taman Bercham Raya low-cost housing scheme near here today.

The RM90.7 million project, comprising 1,100 units of affordable homes, is being undertaken by the Emkay Group in collaboration with the State Government. The launch marked the end of the Prime Minister's two-day visit to the State.

"In Malaysia, we have always stressed the importance of projects to be carried out speedily."

He said the Kuala Lumpur City Centre was one of them. "Every floor of the KLCC was completed in four days. If construction was slow, it would still not be ready until now," he added.

KLCC, the world's tallest building which was opened last year, was built using stainless steel instead of reinforced concrete as structure.

He said Putra Jaya, the new Federal Government administrative centre, was completed in less than three years.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said speedy construction did not mean developers could compromise on quality.

"If they carried out their work properly and with proper supervision, it would not affect the quality ... sometimes, even projects where progress was slow, the quality leaves much to be desired," he said.

Asked to comment on First Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin's statement last week that banks were still slow in approving loans, he said the Government would be consulting the banks so that they could accelerate the process of loan approval.

"Any delay involves costs, like if one has to purchase the land, payment has to be made and there is the interest payment that one has to consider.

"So to reduce costs, the process has to be expedited," he said.

Dr Mahathir also noted that since the directive from the National Economic Action Council, the construction of low-cost homes had been expedited.

Previously, some developers would build the more expensive types first before concentrating on the low-cost in order to make profits.

"Now, the developers would either build the projects simultaneously or the low-cost homes first."

Dr Mahathir was confident that if low-cost housing projects could be carried out speedily, the low-cost housing target could be achieved. Furthermore, banks too are faster in processing housing loans.

On the directive to State Governments to submit progress reports on low-cost housing projects every two weeks, he said most of the States had been complying with the directive although some were not.

On whether there were any plans to build low-cost houses in the Multimedia Super Corridor, Dr Mahathir said it would depend on demand for

such houses.

He, however, said there was still available land for such purposes in areas surrounding the MSC.

He added that Emkay was planning to jointly undertake the project, probably with Cuepacs, and was trying to get the land to embark on the project, primarily to meet the housing needs of officers in the lower rung.

Asked whether the Federal Government would extend the Multimedia Super Corridor concept to other States, he said at the moment the MSC would only be confined to the existing area.

"We want to focus the area, although some State Governments have started their own IT area.

"But at the moment, MSC will be focused in that area as we want to make it a success before spreading out throughout the country," he said.

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