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35,000 units of flats to be built for squatters

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A TOTAL of 35,000 units of low-cost flats will be ready by the year 2001 to house some 175,000 squatters in the Federal Territory and Selangor, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh said.

"Some of the low-cost units are for sale but the rest will be for rent of RM124 a month for each family," Ting told a news conference after receiving a call from new Chinese ammbassador to Malaysia, Mr Guan Dengming, at the ministry in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Ting said the construction cost of each unit range between RM43,000 and RM44,000.

He said the scheme is part of the Government's strategy to resettle squatters in the country.

Upon completion of the projects, the Government will transfer the houses to the local authorities to manage.

Ting was commenting on the proposed national strategy to control, resettle and overcome squatter problems, as outlined in the mid-term review of the Seventh Malaysian Plan (7MP, 1996-2000).

The mid-term review of 7MP, which was tabled in the Parliament by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Thursday, stated that the Government will commission a nationwide study to formulate a national strategy to deal with the squatter problems.

The objective is to produce an integrated action plan and guidelines for the public and private sectors.

Ting said the proposed strategy and measures are being worked out by respective state governments as the land involving squatters populations is under the states' jurisdiction.

However, he said as the squatters issue is related to housing matter, the ministry is also involved in formulating the strategy.

"At this stage, each state government is currently preparing for a strategy (to overcome the squatters problem) at the respective state.

"We have to settle the matter in stages, we cannot do it all at once," he said.

Ting said Federal Territory and Selangor face the most serious problem of squatters compared with other states.

He noted that the 35,000 low-cost units are inadequate to resettle all the squatters families in the Klang Valley.

"The scheme will be able to house some of the squatters only.

"The squatters population varies from time to time. If the Government resettle them, new families will come and set up another squatters population," he said.

However, Ting said the Government is serious in handling the squatters issue, indicated by the on-going projects of constructing 35,000 low-cost units for the families.

He said the scheme will be expanded to other major urban centres where the state government will allocate suitable land for such projects.

According to the mid-term review of the Seventh Malaysian Plan (1996-2000), there were 1.044 million squatters in the country, with the highest concentration in Federal Territory and Selangor.

The study found that about 87 per cent of the total or 917,160 squatters are locals.

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