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Property manager riding roughshod over owners

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CONSIDERING the Government's recent push to rejuvenate the housing industry and encourage foreign investment, one would expect that the Housing and Local Government Ministry would be more proactive and be the agency that house or condominium buyers could turn to when they encounter problems with the developer.

Condominiums have sprouted in and around Kuala Lumpur ever since Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in a speech some years ago stated that city living was about living in condominiums.

Given the trend I would think that the Ministry would be on the ball to review existing housing laws to ensure that condominium owners had adequate protection.

My husband and I are owners of an apartment in what has been called a five-star condominium development in Taman Duta.

We have been residing here for four years and during this period we have been subjected to not only extremely poor service but also threats from the property manager to cut off our water and electricity supply and deny us access to our home.

The property manager has also tried to double our service fee.

We have written to the Ministry as individual owners and collectively through the residents and owners' association.

To date we have had no response from the Ministry.

All our efforts to work with the property manager have been stymied and our efforts to get the Ministry to intervene have been futile.

It has now come to our knowledge that the property manager who has accrued losses of over half a million is trying to recover the money from the owners.

They are refusing to give a letter of release to allow a sale until the owner settles his or her portion of the deficit. They will also be doing this when we have to collect our strata titles.

As an owner I have no access to their monthly expenditure even though the law is clear that the property manager has to submit a statement of expenditure with every monthly bill.

My question is why should I and others in similar positions have to turn to the courts for action when we have a government agency that can function as a mediator.

Given the problems that condominium owners face, the Ministry should be reviewing the laws instead of hiding behind a wall of silence.

The Ministry's inaction only gives property managers and developers the licence to ride roughshod over the man in the street. It will also affect foreign investor confidence in the long run.