

Cooperate with govt, PM tells squatters

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Don't impose conditions that cannot be met when asked to relocate

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SUNGAI BULOH, Sun: Squatters should not impose difficult conditions on the government when it offers to relocate them, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

They are also advised not to believe promises made by those from the opposition parties and non-governmental organisations, which tell them to reject the government's compensation offer and the price set for their new homes.

"The government wishes to place all squatters in proper houses, but they have to cooperate with it. Many squatters can't be relocated because they impose conditions that cannot be met by the government," Mahathir

said at a ceremony to hand over house keys to 20 new owners of the Damansara Damai Affordable Homes at the project site in Sungai Buloh today.

He said: "For example, they say that RM25,000 for a low-cost house is too high. We are willing to offer them instalment packages and loans, or even let them rent the houses, but they are not willing.

"You may see Kuala Lumpur with all its beautiful skyscrapers, but behind them are squatter areas. This shows that there are Malaysians who just cannot afford to rent a house, much less own one."

Mahathir, who is also chairman of the Klang Valley Squatter Committee, later told a press conference that the RM25,000 price for a low-cost house is already low as it is subsidised.

He expressed regret over the situation in Kampung Ba-

ru, located in the city, where squatters are asking the same price for their land as that for the surrounding area.

He said: "For how long can they stay like that in the middle of the city? We have plans to redevelop Kampung Baru so that it will not look as if Malays are living like that.

"We want to develop the area, but the development cost must be low. We can forcibly remove them but the opposition parties and NGOs will make noise about it and instigate the people with promises of legal help."

Such instigators only cause difficulties to the squatters by telling them to reject the government offer.

He said if the people want speedy solutions, they should seek help from the Barisan Nasional people's representatives, instead of going to the opposition parties and NGOs which hope to topple the gov-

ernment with foreign help.

He challenged the instigators to build low-cost houses and pay high compensation to the squatters.

Turning to the flood problem in the Klang Valley, Mahathir said people dump garbage in rivers, causing them to become clogged. The rivers then overflow, and this results in floods.

"If our rivers are not clogged with garbage, we will not have floods. Rivers are not the place to throw old cars and refrigerators."

Mahathir also advised the new house owners to maintain their houses.

He said: "The price of the houses may be low for now, but it will appreciate in 20 to 30 years.

"Do not part with them readily because they are an investment. They can be sold at very high prices, if you take care of them."