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Dream kampung houses for the lower-income families

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"FOR sale. Double-storey traditional kampung house in Kedah!

"Three-bedroom, two-bathroom with a large plot of land complete with fruit trees like durian, duku, coconut, mango, ciku and mangosteen. No fencing. Located in a newly-built village self-contained development with plenty of modern amenities. Just completed.

"Flexible loan repayment scheme. Price between RM39,000 and RM43,000."

An advertisement like this would reasonably receive a deluge of inquiries but, alas, houses like this will never be sold on the open market.

These houses were in fact built for the lower-income families in Kubang Pasu district, who earn a monthly income of under RM2,000.

Known as Kampung Tradisi, the project is a glimpse into what future low-cost housing projects for the rural poor can be.

Instead of the usual single-storey link houses or high-rise flats in cramped communities, Kampung Tradisi allows residents to enjoy modern amenities in a true kampung setting.

Residents get to enjoy the best of both worlds.

The Kampung Tradisi programme is jointly undertaken by the Prime Minister's Department and the Kedah Government.

Two pilot projects have been completed involving the construction of 352 houses in Temin and Binjal in Kubang Pasu district, north of Alor Star.

Kampung Tradisi Lembah Keriang in Jalan Sintok, Temin, has 191 units on a 26.6ha site.

Another 161 units are at Kampung Tradisi Paya Pahlawan in Binjal on 31.2ha of land.

The houses are two-storey units.

On the ground floor is a bedroom, kitchen, dining area and toilet. Another two bedrooms, a toilet and a living room are on the second floor.

Two sets of staircases link the upper and lower storeys. One is inside the house; the other outside.

The project was started in Oct 2002. The houses are now ready for occupation and residents are expected to move in soon.

Project developer Pedoman Semarak Sdn Bhd's company secretary and finance manager Mohamad Hatar Ismail said the project was the first of its kind in the country, and might be used as a blueprint for modern rural villages in the future.

He said several States, including Johor, Perak, Malacca and Negeri Sembilan, had expressed interest in starting similar villages to address the housing needs of lower-income families in rural areas.

Mohamad Hatar said the idea of a well-planned modern village was mooted by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad several years ago, when he cited examples of how small hamlets in England grew to become towns.

He said the former premier specifically wanted the traditional concept of community living to be maintained while incorporating modern features.

"The idea of kampung living is idyllic, with wooden houses and enough land around them to rear poultry and plant trees," Mohamad Hatar said.

He said the houses are linked to a central sewage treatment plant, and other amenities such as a mosque for the village in Temin and a surau in Binjal.

Each Kampung Tradisi community will also have a police station, a clinic, a community resource centre, offices for the village head, a post

office, a market, a kindergarten and shops.

The design also incorporates cul-de-sac roads to minimise traffic and make the roads safe for children.

Each unit will have a floor area of between 727 and 743 square feet, while the land area is between 10,000 and 12,000 square feet.

Flood mitigation measures were also included, with a pond built to store excess water run-off during rainy seasons. It will also serve as a recreational spot for the neighbourhood.

"The buyers are actually getting a bargain because the project is heavily subsidised, with the State Government providing the land while the construction cost is borne by the Federal Government," said Mohamad Hatar.

"The total cost for the project is about RM90 million and the buyers are getting the house at a bargain price since it is valued at RM80,000 per unit if sold in the open market.

"The beauty of it is that the houses are already completed with the Certificate of Fitness issued for Kampung Temin and a temporary CF for Binjal."

Five types of fruit trees and herbal plants like serai wangi and pandan are already planted to help demarcate property boundaries.

"The prospective buyers need only to wash their feet and go in because the houses are already completed and ready for occupation."

Houseowners are also allowed to make renovations or to build additional houses on their land, on pre-approved guidelines and designs, by applying to the local authority.

"But they must maintain the facade and the spirit of the traditional village and this rules out tearing the house down to build a bungalow," he said.

The houses may even become the latest tourist attraction as there are plans by the State Government to promote it as a model village.