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Koh: Uda to blame for `pre-war' settlements

PENANG, Mon. - Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon today blamed the Urban Development Authority for pockets of "pre-war" settlements in Tanjung Tokong.

He said the State Government had handed over 16ha of reclaimed land to the authority to build affordable houses in the 1990s but nothing was done.

"Uda had problems then, but now it is under a new management. We will talk to them to expedite their housing programme," he said about Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call for more balanced development so that the poor could also own houses.

Dr Mahathir had made the call after seeing the disparity in housing between the poor and the rich when he took a drive between Tanjung Tokong and Batu Ferringhi with Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei on Saturday.

Dr Mahathir was concerned about the many wooden houses, which he described as similar to those which he remembered seeing in the 1950s.

Koh said the many luxury homes and hotels along the Tanjung Tokong-Batu Ferringhi stretch was not aimed at turning it into an exclusive residential area.

He said most of the projects had been there for a long time, and developers had fulfilled their obligations to build affordable houses as part of their agreement with the local authorities.

"I had raised the matter with Dr Mahathir when we were travelling to the function and did not hide the problems faced by residents in Tanjung Tokong and the neighbouring areas.

"We accept Dr Mahathir's advice positively."

He said Kuala Lumpur and most cities in the country also faced housing and squatter problems.

"We are doing our best and hope for additional federal allocations to build more affordable houses."