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Landmark township for the masses

A mammoth housing project for 12,000 families in the low- and medium-income brackets, complete with facilities such as community centres, modern bus terminals, shopping centres, food courts and playgrounds, is to be built on 1,000 acres in Sungai Buloh, Selangor.

The announcement of this project, called the Klang Valley Development Corridor (KVDC), by Second Finance Minister Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis followed swiftly on the heels of Budget 2004 unveiled by his boss and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Parliament last Friday.

Dr Mahathir said the pilot project, based on a new concept in the construction of affordable homes, would be implemented at the township on land owned by the Rubber Research Institute of Malaysia.

The township will also have religious centres, commercial facilities and retail shops, police and fire stations and schools.

According to Jamaluddin, the KVDC, which will be launched before the end of the year, aims to "reduce the current feeling of disparity among low- and middle-income groups" in and around the Klang Valley. Additionally, he said it would enable them to enjoy a better quality of life in a place where their properties will appreciate to a reasonably high value.

The medium-cost units in the township are expected to be priced below RM100,000.

A total of 4,800 low-, 2,400 low-medium and 4,800 medium-cost units would be built for first-time homeowners, young graduates and newly-weds.

Jamaludin said 10 or 20 per cent of the units would be reserved for the police or members of the armed forces, whose presence would boost the Rukun Tetangga neighbourhood patrol.

Another objective of the KVDC, he added, was to overcome any housing shortfall resulting from the Budget announcement relieving private housing developers of their obligation to build 30 per cent low-cost houses in their schemes.

As to how much private developers would have to contribute to Syarikat Perumahan Negara Berhad (SPN) to build the low-cost houses in their projects, Jamaluddin said this would be worked out at a meeting with representatives of the Real Estate and Housing Developers Association (Rehda).

He said that since market forces govern private developers, the construction of low-cost houses was often the last priority for them and in a number of instances, the construction of these units stopped midway, or were abandoned.

Thus, it would be better if the Government allowed these developers to concentrate on the business of providing housing demanded by the market, while SPN undertook the building of low-cost houses.