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130 Orang Asli get keys to new homes

June Ramli

PETALING JAYA, Sun. - It was all smiles for 130 Orang Asli today when they received the keys to their medium-cost apartments in Desa Temuan, Bukit Lanjan, near here, under the final package of the RM60.9 million Orang Asli resettlement programme.

At the handing-over ceremony, a symbolic key was presented to the head of the Temuan community, Tok Batin Ismael Chat, by MK Land Holdings executive chairman Tan Sri Mustapha Kamal Abu Bakar.

One of the recipients, factory worker Shamsuddin Abdullah, said he would move into the apartment soon.

"I am so happy that finally I have my own house," said Shamsuddin who is staying with his mother nearby.

Ramli Tansilu, 29, also a factory worker, is "extremely happy" about his new apartment, which he intends to let out and stay with his mother-in-law instead.

"We do not want to leave her as she will be alone," he said, adding that his father-in-law died last year.

Each apartment has a built-up area of 675 sq ft, three rooms, a toilet and a bathroom. Facilities such as a sepak takraw court, children's playground, school, a multi-purpose hall and an Orang Asli museum have also been provided.

Today's ceremony marks the end of the 1995 resettlement project when the State Government appointed Saujana Triangle Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of MK Land Holdings Berhad and a member of the Emkay Group of companies, to develop Bukit Lanjan, a former settlement area of the Temuan community.

Under the package, 147 Orang Asli families received single-storey bungalows which were handed over to them in November 2001 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. This was a month after they received double-storey terrace houses from the developer and a community centre in Sungai Buloh.

They also received Amanah Saham Bumiputera shares, valued at RM45,000, and relocation allowances of RM300 each.

Speaking after the ceremony, Mustapha Kamal said he was happy that the project had ended on a good note, but was now concerned about the future of the Temuan community.

He said while the project's physical objective had been achieved, its social objective was still not fully realised.

"We are not going to wash our hands off the project ...we will continue to support the community.

"We need the expertise and assistance of the Orang Asli Affairs Department, Rural Development Ministry, National Unity and Social Development Ministry and the Community Development Department to come up with community programmes."