

'Affordable housing' on the way
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In a move that could boost BN's popularity ahead of potential snap polls, the premier today announced the first phase of an extensive affordable housing programme ranging all the way to 2018.

The first phase in Precinct 11, Putrajaya - where the 1Malaysia Affordable Housing Programme (Pr1ma) was announced - will see the construction of 560 units of apartments by 2014. Ranging in size from 815-1,006 square feet, they will be priced from RM120,000 per unit.

The Precinct 11 project by Putrajaya Holdings is meant for first-time buyers with household incomes of less than RM6,000 a month, and is one of two to be completed this year.

Another is due to start in the fourth quarter of the year. Located in Bandar Tun Razak, it will be developed by SP Setia and Tradewinds.

The units in Bandar Tun Razak and in the next 18 projects will be priced from RM150,000-300,000, for units ranging in size from 800-1,400 square feet.

Announcing this today, Najib Abdul Razak (centre in photo) said buyers can obtain loans of up to 105 percent with a repayment period of up to 30 years from selected financial institutions, while also enjoying exemption of stamp duty.

"The Pr1ma programme is done through private-public partnership whereby the government provides land or facilitates funds or a combination of both...to ensure the units can be sold at as low as RM150,000," he said.

He said that buyers must occupy the homes for 10 years in order to discourage speculation activities.

The "transparent and equitable distribution of the homes" will be conducted by a new body under the Prime Minister's Department.

"A new Act (will be tabled during) the next Parliament sitting to turn this into a large-scale development programme for downstream support industries," he said.

The government has earmarked 20 areas in Rawang, Seremban and in the Klang Valley for the purpose of building some 42,000 units over the next decade.

The subsequent Pr1ma developments will be spearheaded by government-linked developer Sime Darby, which has been chosen to develop Bandar Ainsdale in Seremban, Putra Heights in Subang Jaya, Ara Damansara in Petaling, Bandar Bukit Raja in Klang, Elmina East in Shah Alam, Kota Elmina in Sungai Buloh and Lagong Mas.

Affordable housing units will also be available in Precincts 11-2, 5, 17-1, 19-1, 19-2 and 19-3 (all to be developed by Putrajaya Holdings), while MRCB will develop 3000 units in Seremban Central.

Another 794 units will be developed by Cyberview in Cyberjaya while 10,000 units more will be built by 1Malaysia Development Bhd in Sungai Besi, although this is still in development stages.

The last of the development projects of three-bedroom and two-bathroom units will begin in the third quarter of 2018.

'Vote for BN'

In his opening speech, Federal Territories and Urban Well-being Minister Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal

Abidin said the move is to address the urban housing crunch facing young workers, including professionals.

"The first phase...is targeted to senior and young professionals who have just entered the job market (and) are not allowed to own low-cost housing, as their income is above the threshold of RM2,500 per household.

"You should clap louder for this as I believe many of you are in this category. But don't forget to later vote for BN."

Affordable housing has been the make-or-break issue in many election campaigns worldwide, most recently swaying votes away from the ruling regime in the Singapore polls.

The BN government had earlier announced a loan scheme for first-time buyers aged under 35 for houses priced at RM100, 000-220,000.

While this has received considerable attention from young workers, economists argue that it worsens the already unsustainable debt burden on this 'sandwich class' whose wages have been severely depressed over the past two decades.

The Selangor Pakatan Rakyat government is also putting focus on affordable housing, as most of the residents comprise the urban middle or lower middle class.

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