

Balik Pulau MP won't stand again if evictions take place
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PKR Balik Pulau MP Yusmadi Yusoff has sworn not to recontest in the same constituency if even a single household was demolished to make way for development.

Yusmadi (right) said it would be pointless for him to be the MP here if his constituents, especially the poor, were deprived of homes.

He said the problem of eviction and demolition of homes in Balik Pulau has reached "critical level".

"We are facing a crisis here, with many cases pending in court, yet developers manage to get approval for their projects," he said in press conference in Simpang Ampat.

Yusmadi said he was disappointed with some of his colleagues in the Penang Municipal Council who had failed to turn up at meetings to help resolve the Balik Pulau people's issues.

"I have telephoned and send SMS-es. I do not get a response or I am told that the person is busy attending other functions," said the lawyer.

"When PKR top leaders, like Anwar Ibrahim is here, the very same person would rush to be right in front to take photos, to show his presence and support," Yusmadi claimed.

"Maybe he is lobbying to become a candidate, but I do not want to be this kind of candidate," he added.

Task force on housing rights

Yusmadi said, he had often been asked if he would repeat his candidacy in Balik Pulau, while others tell him he is better off in a seat in Kuala Lumpur.

However, he replied that this was not as important as whether he could defend the people of Balik Pulau, whether he could protect them from losing a roof over their heads.

"I may be politically naive, but I promise you that even if one house here is demolished, I will withdraw from re-contesting in the Balik Pulau parliamentary seat," he said.

"And I urge all Balik Pulau residents to vote for the MP or assemblyperson who can defend you and help you with your issues, regardless of political affiliation," he added.

During the press event, Yusmadi launched a Balik Pulau Task force on the right to housing and land rights. He was accompanied by several Balik Pulau representatives from various kampungs.

Facing eviction

Close to 500 villagers, from Kg. Kuala Jalan Baru (32 households), Kg. Binjai (17), Kg. Teluk Kumbar (16), Kg. Bukit Kecil Sg Pinangg (9), Kg. Pondok Upeh (6), Kg. Bagan Ayer Intam and Kg. Paya Teluk Kumbar (1), are facing eviction or awaiting court decisions.

Most of these projects, according to Yusmadi, were initiated during the previous BN administration although he thanked thoughtful developers who sat down with affected villagers to discuss compensation packages.

Yusmadi said the threat of eviction was faced by villagers from all ethnic groups, and denied that only Malays were being marginalised or discriminated.

He added he was in the process of compiling scandalous development projects which has caused the people much suffering.

He urged the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission to look into incidences of corruption in Balik Pulau and take action.

"This is an issue for everyone, not only for the folks of Balik Pulau. It is pointless wanting development when we become victims of development," he added.

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