

'Developers persecute Malays due to split in Umno'
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Jelutong Umno members have refuted state party chief Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's claim that the marginalisation of Malay villages in Penang is due to the heavy price which had to be paid for a switch in political allegiance.

Abdul Wahab Abdullah, Pantai Umno branch chief, blamed instead the marginalisation of the villages on the well-known split of the party in the Jelutong division.

NONE Abdul Wahab (left), who claimed that many of his branch members were affected residents soon to be evicted from Kampung Jalan Pokok Asam, said that developers were "taking advantage" of Umno's split in the area to persecute the Malay community.

He said developers supported by the state government have "conspired" to wipe out the Malay community from the face of Penang.

He added that the developers, who mooted the project about five years ago when BN was still leading Penang, had compensated the residents poorly, merely offering them a package about RM10,000 to RM70,000 for each family.

"This amount is a kind of persecution towards the Malay community; it is not even enough to pay for rent or buy a new flat when the residents move away from their homes," he said during a press conference in Penang yesterday.

"The residents and their forefathers, who are considered original people of the area, have lived there for more than 80 years, so whatever the developer is doing to them is heartbreaking," he added.

Recently, while officially opening the Kemaman division delegates meeting, Ahmad Zahid said that Malaysians, especially the Malays, had to realise that Umno, which was the backbone of the BN, always championed the interests of everyone.

Ahmad Zahid, who is an Umno vice-president, responded thus when asked to comment on a newspaper report that about 200 people from the village had been given three months eviction notice by the developer of a high-rise residential project.

However, the split in the 42 Umno branches in Jelutong will not deter the party from helping the affected villagers to lighten their burden during the eviction process.

NONE Abdul Wahab said that the 17 Umno branches which were supposedly dissolved last month would be monitoring the situation and have organised an action committee in aid of the villagers.

He said the decision came after the branches held a division committee meeting yesterday, which also planned to hold an annual general meeting on July 12.

"We will be contacting politicians, state assemblypersons and non-governmental organisations soon to help the villagers get a better deal," he said.

More villagers set to be evicted

Meanwhile, villagers from Kampung Jalan Pokok Asam would not be the last to be evicted from Jelutong in the coming months.

Abdul Wahab said villagers of Kampung Tengah, also inside Jelutong, who had been evicted due to high-rise development projects, were also compensated very poorly by the developer.

"This high-rise project took place five years ago, it has affected about a hundred houses or 400 people, and all of them are Malays," he said.

"We are not rejecting development but please be fair to the original residents of these villages, who are the Malays, don't let it bring injustice to us," he added.

According to another branch leader from Jalan P Ramlee, Syed Hussein Mohamad, villagers in Jalan Petani would also be evicted due to the widening of the banks of the Sungai Pinang river to avoid floods in the area.

Syed Hussein also lamented that the compensation packages offered to villagers were dismal and insufficient to help the latter overcome their plight.

"This is very sad. This village, where (deceased celebrity) P Ramlee used to live should be preserved, it is part of our heritage," he said.

"Please do not let the Malays disappear from this area just because we need to widen the river," he pleaded.

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