

Headline gores YB into vigorous denial mode
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Pantai Jerejak assemblyperson Sim Tze Tsin is having sleepless nights after speaking on the need for low-cost housing units in the state to a local English daily. For, the next morning he woke up to a headline screaming "Penang may ban low-cost homes".

Sim said he had no problems with the content of the article, but the headline was probably a "spin by its editors" to throw the Pakatan Rakyat government into a negative realm.

"I have no power to ban low-cost housing, nor will I ban them. I am not insane!" Sim told Malaysiakini, adding that such units were still very much needed by low income families in the island and mainland.

pkR weekly pc 151107 sim tze tsin Sim, (left) who is Penang Housing Department council member, was referring to the Star's report on Thursday quoting him as saying that the department might stop building low-cost units with a built-up area of less than 700 sq ft.

He was also reported as saying that the move was to prevent the state from having too many dirty and unsightly low-cost flats which would be a discomfort for the residents.

He had also been quoted as having suggested that the compensation given by developers to squatters be used to build new houses for them near the original squatter settlements.

However, Sim said what he wanted to expound was the idea of "affordable homes with livable environments" as it was the trend for developers to build homes way beyond the means of the general population.

Young priced out of market

He added that young working adults find it difficult to even afford a home as link houses in industrialised parts of Penang island are selling for RM600,000 or more, and condominiums, above RM350,000.

NONE "It is, without the slightest doubt, way beyond the means of around 70 percent of Penangites. However, these homes are still selling like hot cakes and therefore, driving the prices higher and higher," he said, adding that developers are required to build cheap 600-700 sq ft low cost flats that are priced over RM40,000 per unit.

"It is very popular among young families, because many people can't afford link houses and this is affordable for most Penangites," he added.

Sim said what the state needed were homes in the RM100,000-300,000 range. Low income groups can get help from the federal or state government for assistance in terms of financing," he added.

However, the Star report seemed to have set the cat among the pigeons. A few Umno leaders had jumped at the chance to accuse PAS and PKR of being afraid to speak up on the fate of Malays in the state.

Leading the charge was senator Saripah Aminah Syed Mohamed, who asked the two parties to set aside their political interests and look into the plight of the allegedly oppressed community (in Penang).

"Where are these Malay leaders when the homes of the Kampung Jalan Pokok Asam residents are to be demolished, whereas they vehemently defended the Kampung Buah Pala case?" she was quoted by Bernama.

"Where is the voice of the other Malay opposition leaders who are supposed to struggle for their race,

religion and country? This is not about racism, but about protecting Malay rights," she added, when debating the Tenth Malaysia Plan in the Dewan Negara on Thursday.

Senator Roslan Awang Chik questioned the real motive of the Penang government in stopping the construction of low-cost houses and demolishing the homes and trade premises of the Malays, purportedly for development purposes.

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