

Kg Berembang villagers want demands heard
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Their houses in Kampung Berembang have been flattened and they are living in tents, but 69 families are still fighting for alternative housing and compensation.

Holding a press conference under a makeshift tent sheltering people from the blistering heat this morning, the Kampung Berembang Resolution Committee said residents want their demands heard.

"We are ready to negotiate with the developers about our future. We just want our demands heard," said the deputy chairperson Mohd Nazry Hamzah, 48.

He was the Malaysia Airline System property department officer until he quit his job to guard the village full time.

The committee is proposing that the developer Perspektif Masa and the Selangor government consider the following options:

- Permanent housing in Kampung Berembang as promised in 2002 to be purchased at RM35,000 per house, damages for demolished houses and property, transport and moving costs, difficulties arising and suffering caused to families;
- Relocation in a nearby area, free low-cost housing, damages for demolished houses and property, transport and moving costs, difficulties arising and suffering caused to families;
- A lump sum payment considering factors such as their having been settlers on the land for more than 40 years, housing promised in Kampung Berembang, illegal demolition of houses, transport and moving costs, difficulties arising and suffering caused to families.

The site of the village has been barricaded since the demolition exercise was completed on March 7 and most of the villagers have dispersed.

Today, some 30 tents house the remaining families along the dirt road leading up to the site of the village. A banner with the words 'The tragedy of Kampung Berembang' greets visitors.

Safeguarding the site

Committee secretary Husin Ahmad, 48, said the villagers are still being harassed by the police, developers and most recently, Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB).

"TNB officials have sent letters telling villagers to vacate the place because it's directly under high-tension electric cables," he told malaysiakini.

"This spot is the only area the police have allowed us to stay. Where will we go if we have to vacate this spot?"

Husin, was a senior production executive with Panasonic, said he, Nazry and five other

committee-members have sacrificed their jobs to keep watch over the village.

"We wake up at 8am and make sure that the surrounding area is clean. Health and cleanliness is a concern here. We also assist other villagers who need help," said the father of two.

"We also make sure that nobody from MPAJ (Ampang Jaya Municipal Council), the police or TNB harass us."

He expressed concern over several media reports that have labelled the villagers "illegal squatters", "stubborn" or "demanding for land".

"Our parents were invited to settle here 40 years ago. We are not squatters. We have had five chief ministers visiting us during election campaigns. We had electricity and water supply. We are not demanding for much. We simply want what was promised to us," he clarified.

On the ongoing efforts to get the developer to negotiate, he said no reply has been received to date.

The residents sought help from the Selangor government but their appeal was rejected. They have also sent numerous memoranda to the prime minister and housing and local government minister.

In November 2002, the villagers were promised that they would be relocated to a nearby area under a housing project by the developer and were offered alternative housing in Puchong until completion of the project.

However, they were forcibly evicted three years later - before the project was completed - after they failed to obtain an injunction against MPAJ. The developer then revoked all the pledges and started the demolitions last November.

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