

Govt's 'Middle Class Homes' Raises Concerns On Affordability And Traffic Congestion

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According to The Star's front page story headlined "Middle class homes: Govt-led initiative to build affordable apartments" today, Housing and Local Government Minister Chor Chee Heung announced that the development of "middle class homes" costing between RM220k to RM300k in major cities will be launched this year.

At the price of between RM220k to RM300k for a built-up area of between 850 – 1000 sq ft, these so-called middle class homes are still far beyond the reach of the majority of Malaysians.

60% of households earn under RM3,000

According to the government's 2007 household census, 60% of Malaysia's households survive with a monthly household income of under RM3,000. This segment of society, which make up the majority of Malaysians live from month to month. Their threshold for additional costs is razor thin. Plus, in recent years, they have become further burdened by the removal of petrol and sugar subsidies by the government. Thus, it is unrealistic and ignorant of the government to expect these Malaysians to be able to afford these so-called "middle class homes".

To illustrate, my own home, a condominium in Kuchai which I purchased about 3 years ago, cost RM250,000 with a built-up area of about 1500 sq ft. Thus, the government's pricing of so-called "middle class homes" between RM220k to RM300k for a built-up area of 850 – 1000 sq ft, which is much smaller, can hardly be called affordable.

I urge the Government to take a leaf from the State Government of Selangor which, through its state development arm Selangor Development Corp (PKNS), is currently building affordable flats costing under RM100,000 at various locations in Selangor to make home ownership genuinely affordable for Malaysians in need.

1Malaysia housing project

I refer to an earlier report by Bernama headlined "1Malaysia Housing Project At Sungai Besi Airbase Site" on 23 June 2011, which stated that Prime Minister Najib announced that a Projek Perumahan Rakyat 1Malaysia (PRIMA) or 1Malaysia people's housing project will be developed on a piece of land at the Sungai Besi airbase in Kuala Lumpur.

Prime Minister Najib should clarify whether this 1Malaysia housing project in Sungai Besi is part of the "middle class homes" announced by Chor Chee Heung.

He should also state the pricing of these homes for the public to judge whether these 1Malaysia housing project is truly affordable to most Malaysians, in relation to their income levels as well as the number of units that will be built.

Traffic bottleneck at Sungai Besi

This 1Malaysia residential project in Sungai Besi will increase traffic congestion in the area because Jalan Sungai Besi and Jalan Tun Razak are well known for their daily traffic jams even now. We can only expect the traffic situation there to become even worse with the

construction of these new residences.

Furthermore, whenever the SMART tunnel is closed for maintenance, the entire road is reduced to gridlock . It will create a traffic bottleneck for cars entering the KL city centre from Cheras, Salak South, Seri Petaling and Seri Kembangan.

I caution the government against the construction of too many housing units at this Sungai Besi location because even though an MRT station is being planned for the area, it will not be adequate to resolve the traffic situation as there will still be many people who have no choice but to drive to reach their place of work.

TERESA KOK is MP for Seputeh

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