

Crusade against graft

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Housing Ministry sets up teams to rid civil service of scourge

THE Housing and Local Government Ministry has set up an Integrity Management Committee at all levels of the government's administration to fight corruption among civil servants.

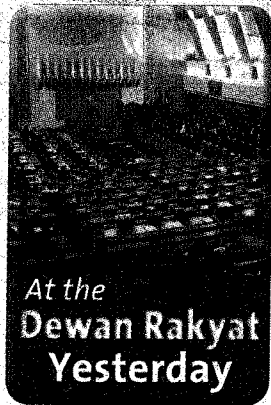
Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said: "One of the major efforts taken by the Government was to set up committees at the federal, state, division and local authority levels to thoroughly fight corruption internally."

Winding up the debate on the Budget, Ong said the Government had also carried out the National Integrity Plan, adding that one of its five goals was to reduce corruption, misappropriation and misuse of power.

"It is also aimed at increasing efficiency in the public delivery system," he said.

The issue of corruption among government officers and local authorities was raised by Chow Kon Yeow (DAP - Tanjong) during the debate last week.

On the move to boost the public delivery system, Ong said the Government had come



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up with 64 measures to improve the system which would act as a set of guidelines for local authorities to set up a Complaints Operation Room to receive, process and solve grievances within a stipulated time.

"The guidelines will allow the ministry to monitor the way local authorities handle and solve complaints," he said, adding that the ministry would also forward complaints it has



Ong: 'This is to make the public delivery system efficient'

received to local authorities.

"The ministry received 1,230 complaints between January and August this year and 584 complaints have been solved by local authorities," said Ong.

On the issue of house prices, Ong said the Government has no plans to control them except for low-cost house prices.

"The Government only needs to control the proposal to increase or cut prices after the prices are fixed by the developer, and after taking discounts into consideration."

He also said house prices were determined by several factors such as the difficulty in obtaining land in choice locations and the delay in processing the developer's application, which involved various levels of government and its agencies.

On the People's Housing Project, Ong said the Government did not plan to sell all the houses under the project, as it must maintain some of them.

"The Government has to maintain some of these houses, especially those in urban areas so that they will not be abandoned and become an eyesore," he said.

He also said each house would be sold at RM35,000 in the peninsula and RM42,000 in Sabah and Sarawak.

The People's Housing Project is a federal project to provide affordable housing to the lower income group and to get rid of squatter colonies.

Earlier during question time, Ong told Karpal Singh (DAP - Bukit Gelugor) that there was no need to re-introduce municipal council elections in Malaysia since the present municipal administrative system was running well.

"This is not a question of not having the courage or being afraid to hold municipal elections. What is important is whether the present municipal administrative system is effective in serving the ratepayers well.

"Malaysia has a unique system unlike those in other countries, and if the present system is doing well, we will continue to use it," he said.

Ong told Mohd Daud Tarihep (BN - Kuala Selangor) that MPs could become municipal councillors if the states agreed to the appointment.

However, he said that the Government was not planning to appoint MPs as councillors for now.

Ong said states have full authority to appoint local councillors as provided for in Section 10 of the Local Government Act, 1976.