

House buyers may soon see end to woes

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PUTRAJAYA: Every state will soon have at least one Commissioner of Buildings (COB) to handle disputes about the management services of high-rise dwellings. The intermediary will be appointed by the state government to handle the disputes between consumers and developers.

This is one of the main thrusts of a new law, the Common Properties Management Act, which will be tabled in Parliament next month or at its next sitting.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the COB should put an end to house buyers' complaints about maintenance during the period between vacant possession and issuance of the strata title.

A developer manages a property until the residents form a building management committee upon receiving their strata titles.

"It has been found that project maintenance during this interim period has raised problems.

"The commissioner will be empowered to handle such problems," Najib said after chairing a meeting of the National Council on Local Governments yesterday.

He said states must select commissioners who were competent in the workings of

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*Housing and Local Government Minister
Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting*

local government. A commissioner could include local council presidents, who can appoint a team to help him.

Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong

Ka Ting, who was also present, said the COB had to be someone from within the local council as the person had to have the power to enforce the new law.

States can appoint as many COBs as they need based on the requirements of their housing infrastructure.

"There has been no legal remedy so far if buyers are not happy with the developer's building management, or if the developer is not carrying out proper maintenance. The COB will be able to smoothen out these problems," Ong said.

On replacing the certificate of fitness (CF) with the certificate of completion and compliance (CCC), Najib said amendments to five main legislations and one by-law would be

tabled in Parliament to enable it to be implemented.

The CCC will be enforced on buildings that are developed 18 months (about the time needed for a building to be completed) from the date the amendments are gazetted, while CFs will be issued for existing projects before they are eventually phased out.

Unlike the CF, which is issued by the local authorities, the CCC will be issued by professional architects or engineers who would verify that a building has met all safety and technical aspects.

Ong said the CCC would cut red tape by local councils and promote self-regulation by professionals in the building industry.

The CCC will also separate

non-technical building aspects from core issues of safety and occupancy fitness.

Non-technical issues include demands by the local authorities for developers to build more roads or drains which are not part of the developer's plan.

Ong said, developers had complained that local authorities made issuance of the CFs contingent upon fulfillment of such demands.

A maximum timeframe for a CCC to be issued is being worked out.

Although the CCC will be based on self-regulation, Ong said local councils would still do counter-checks on construction sites and stop the issuance of the CCC if technical aspects were not followed.