

Build affordable homes fast, says PM

No excuse for delays when documents already in order

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KUALA LUMPUR: As he launched the country's largest affordable housing project to date, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has implored all involved to build such homes with urgency.

The Prime Minister said there is no excuse for delaying projects when all necessary documentation and submissions are in order.

He recounted an instance where the groundbreaking ceremony for an affordable housing project in Kuala Lumpur took place 45 days after the joint development agreement was signed.

"During the launch of the Residensi Madani project in Taman Desa, Kuala Lumpur, 1 set a 45-day deadline for the approval of all documents.

"It was done ... Normally, this process takes six months.

"If it can be done in KL, I'm sure Penang can achieve it as well," he said, referring to the upcoming Rumah Bakat Bara Madani affordable housing development in Penang.

Speaking at the project's joint development agreement signing ceremony at a hotel here yesterday, Anwar described the initiative as "meaningful and close to my heart".

"I take personal interest in this affordable housing project because I was born and raised in Penang.

"There is an urgency when it comes to building affordable homes. Let's make it happen quickly," he said.

The Prime Minister added that he will bring up the matter in the upcoming Cabinet meeting to facilitate further action, as the approval process involves not only the state government but



Housing hope: Anwar posing for a photo with SkyWorld Development Bhd management and staff members, flanked by Nga (right) and Chow (left), after the signing of a joint development agreement for the Bakat Baru Madani affordable housing development project. - AZHAR MAHFUF/The Star

also several federal agencies.

Anwar noted that housing projects, particularly affordable ones, should focus on human-centric aspects and meet the people's basic needs without overlooking essential housing requirements for the community.

"Affordable housing must offer comfort and quality. While pursuing economic growth, we must ensure development remains humane.

"For instance, if high-end homes have premium facilities, affordable housing should at least offer amenities like pools and playgrounds.

"We aim to provide the best facilities possible so that people feel included and valued by the nation."

On the project at hand, Anwar expressed hope that the Penang government and developers would complete the approval process within 45 days.

Rumah Bakat Baru Madani is set to be the largest affordable housing development project in Malaysia's history, with more than 35,000 units to be built for the B40 and M40 groups.

It is jointly developed by SkyWorld Development Bhd and Penang Development Corporation (PDC) with the latter's subsidiary, PDC Properties.

Located on two plots of prime land on the mainland - 13ha in Seberang Jaya and 65.3ha in Batu Kawan - the project will deliver over 35,000 affordable housing and Rumah Bakat Baru Madani units, priced between RM225,000 and RM420,000, with the entire construction timeline expected to take 15 years.

Seberang Jaya and Batu Kawan are vital to Penang's economy, especially in the electrical and electronics sector, with increasing demand and growth potential.

Among those present at the

signing ceremony were Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming, Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow, PDC chief executive officer Datuk Aziz Bakar, PDC Properties chief executive officer Ismail Ishak, SkyWorld Development executive chairman Datuk Seri Ng Thien Phing and its chief executive officer Lee Chee Seng.

In his speech, Chow said Penang's rapid economic growth has led to increased job opportunities and a rise in housing demand.

"In response, the Penang2030 vision aims to enhance liveability and quality of life, targeting 220,000 affordable housing units, 22,000 rent-to-own units and benefiting 3,000 families through the Urban Regeneration Project by 2030.

"So far, 170,000 affordable housing units have been delivered, with efforts underway to

complete the remaining 50,000 homes by 2030," he said.

Describing the Rumah Bakat Baru Madani concept as a game changer, Chow said it offers both Penangites and non-Penangites working there the opportunity to own homes, subsequently ensuring inclusivity and equity in housing.

Nga, in his speech, said the project aligns with the Madani pillar of harmony (*kesejahteraan*).

The project, he said, will be a cornerstone of the Federal Government's 12th Malaysia Plan commitment to deliver 500,000 affordable homes by next year.

He also lauded SkyWorld Development's role in this initiative, adding that such a significant feat deserves a place in the *Malaysia Book of Records*.

"It is a model for other states to emulate, ensuring quality affordable housing remains a priority," Nga added.