

Affordable housing to end Penang Malays' woes

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GEORGE TOWN: DEPUTY Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin yesterday announced that the Federal Government would build more houses to enable Bumiputeras in Penang to own property.

He said for a start, 250 low-medium-cost houses would be built at Kampung Permatang Tok Subuh in mainland Bukit Minyak.

"It will be built as soon as possible. The government is aware of the housing problems faced by the people. It has become a major issue for them, especially the Malays, as houses have become expensive."

Muhyiddin said the government would not stop at the 250 units but would continue to find land and build more affordable houses. He has directed the Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU) of the Prime Minister's Department to identify land for this purpose.

Shortage of land had led developers in the state to build high-rise buildings at exorbitant prices, forcing the poor to move out of the island to the mainland, and sometimes to neighbouring states.

Muhyiddin announced this when addressing some 6,000 people from 60 Malay non-governmental organisations at the Dewan Tunku Syed Putra, Universiti Sains Malaysia, during his day-long visit to the state.

He reminded the NGOs to work together to build solidarity among Bumiputeras in the state.

At a gathering with industrial workers at the Western Digital plant in Bayan Lepas later, Muhyiddin said the DAP-led state government could not just wash its hands off the destruction taking place at hillslopes on the island.

He said Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng had to take responsibility for the ongoing hillslope development in Penang as it had seriously affected the environment and living conditions.

Muhyiddin said there were clear guidelines on hillslope projects set by the Federal Government and this had been strictly adhered to by the previous state administration.

Even DAP assemblyman for Tanjung Bungah, Teh Yee Cheu, had lashed out against such projects, particularly in the north-eastern coastal area and the proposed construction of a 49-storey "super condo" on the Batu Ferringhi seafront.

Muhyiddin also said the Penang government could not the Federal Government's contributions in developing the island-state, adding that Penang had among the best infrastructure in the country and this had attracted billions of ringgit in foreign investments.

"Penang is where it is today because of federal support over the last 30 years. This is a fact but still, Lim has gone round saying that he managed to get billions in investments after just three months in office. I ask you, is this possible?"

Later, during a meeting with 40,000 residents in Raja Uda at the Semarak Kasih Rakyat carnival in Bagan, Muhyiddin urged the people to judge carefully the many allegations and lies hurled at Barisan Nasional by Pakatan Rakyat, namely on Chinese education.

He said it should mean something that after 55 years, no vernacular school had been shut down -- even some schools with only seven teachers and 10 pupils were allowed to remain open.

"The Chinese and Indians are not minorities in this country. We respect and acknowledge the desire of Chinese and Indian parents, who want their children to speak their mother tongue.

"I wouldn't like it if my own child could not speak his mother tongue. We want all our children to do well and every year, the government spends RM2.8 billion and more than RM1 billion to pay the salaries of teachers in these schools." Additional reporting by Looi Sue-Chern

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