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Making homes affordable for all

WHEN it comes to housing, the Negri Sembilan government has a simple policy – that everyone should have a roof over his or her head.

To achieve this, the state government under the stewardship of Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Aminuddin Harun has spent the past 20 months looking at ways to reduce the cost of building more affordable homes to allow more people to own houses, among others.

His administration has taken the first step by identifying 11 locations where state land will be allocated for that purpose.

Aminuddin said his team was prepared to work with the Housing and Local Government Ministry as well as private developers to build more such homes, especially for those from the low- and middle-income groups.

Some 2,000 homes can be built in the 11 locations throughout the state. Employees of the state administration will also benefit from the housing policy.

For a start, the Negri Sembilan Development Corporation has signed a deal with a developer to build 351 units on a 18ha plot of state land located between S2 Heights and Bandar Ainsdale.

Of these units, 150 will be three-room, two-bathroom homes costing from RM90,000 and the remaining 201 will comprise four-room, two-bathroom homes costing from RM250,000.

The fact that more than 1,500 applications for these units have been received is a testament to the demand for affordable homes in the state, more so in areas that are considered to be high-end.

Aminuddin said the state government would continue to ensure that developers strictly adhered to its affordable housing policy so that more people could afford to buy houses.

He said at least 50% of a development larger than 10 acres should comprise affordable houses costing between RM80,000 and RM450,000.

Smaller developments should have at least 30% houses which are in the affordable price range.

Apart from building more



Aminuddin (in blue shirt) meeting some of the buyers of units under the abandoned Taman Perpaduan Heights housing project.

affordable homes, the move by Aminuddin's administration to keep working on its promise to convert properties built on leasehold land to freehold has also been lauded by the rakyat.

Although it had promised to do so within a year after winning the May 2018 general election, the rakyat are happy with the progress on the matter so far.

The biggest hurdle was overcome when the federal authorities gave Aminuddin's administration the green light to proceed with the conversion.

Last November, it was revealed that the state was ready to conduct a pilot project to convert the status of land in several areas.

Under the initiative, owners of leasehold properties whose leases are close to expiry will be given priority when it comes to converting them to freehold.

It was also decided that an individual who owns more than one leasehold property will only be allowed to convert one to freehold.

In a nutshell, the state administration has been making good progress on its promise to provide more housing for the people.

But one particular move that has received praise from the people was the ability of Aminuddin's administration to help buyers of

houses in Taman Perpaduan Heights, Kuala Pilah, which were abandoned 17 years ago.

In the late 1990s, the Kuala Pilah district council had entered into a joint venture agreement with a developer to build 781 units of low-cost houses, single-storey and double-storey terrace houses and shophots on the state government-owned land.

The low-cost units were priced at RM35,000, the medium-cost units at RM59,800 and the shophots at RM120,000.

However, the project was abandoned in 2002 after the developer had built just 231 units or more than 50% of the promised amount.

Of the 231 units, 206 were sold and 40% were bought by government servants.

Aminuddin first met the buyers in October 2018 after Pakatan Harapan won the state election, looking for a way to help them.

In September 2019, his administration found that the abandoned project could not be rehabilitated as it was no longer viable and uneconomic.

Findings by a team revealed that the parties had failed to conduct due diligence on the proposed project as the soil was found to be unsuitable.

Aminuddin said the developer's



More high-rise apartments are being built in Seremban as more people move to the state capital due to the affordable prices.

ability to carry out the project was also not properly done and that authorities had failed to effectively monitor the progress of the project.

He said what was more painful for the buyers was that they were forced to continue servicing their bank loans. Some were even blacklisted by banks as they were unable to pay.

After looking at several options, Aminuddin's team came up with a brilliant idea.

They decided to offer all the buyers a piece of land measuring 32.8 acres located some 10km from the first project, where they would be able to build their own homes.

Those who made bookings for low-cost units were offered a 3,000sq ft plot of land, while those who bought the medium-cost units and shophots were offered a 5,000sq ft plot of land.

The buyers would also be allowed to build any type of house they wished to.

They unanimously accepted Aminuddin's offer and agreed to a condition to build their homes within two years after getting the necessary approvals from the authorities.

Aminuddin said if his team could complete the necessary paperwork in time, the buyers should get their titles by March this year.

In addition, he said the state government had agreed to set aside RM5.5mil for infrastructure projects in the new area.

The new site has its advantages as it is located closer to a new 100-acre development in nearby Juasseh.

To attract more investments from abroad, the state administration is looking at relaxing the current regulations on housing to enable foreigners to buy high-end properties in Negri Sembilan.

Foreigners are now allowed to only buy houses worth over RM2mil.

The state is considering to revert to its previous policy, where the price threshold was set at RM1mil. This was also because the ceiling price in neighbouring states was much lower.

The move to reduce the ceiling price was also in line with a proposal by the federal authorities to lower the price threshold for foreign buyers who wished to buy condominiums and apartments from RM1mil to RM600,000.

When tabling the 2020 Budget on Oct 11 last year, Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng had proposed this in a bid to reduce the overhang in supply of condominiums and apartments, which amounted to RM8.3bil in the second quarter of 2019.