

PPR folk owe councils million\$

Take action against non-paying tenants in these projects, authorities urged

KUALA LUMPUR: The issue of high rental arrears has continued to plague the People's Housing Projects (PPR) and Public Housing (PA) schemes, no thanks to errant defaulters.

The Seremban City Council (MBS) disclosed last month that it was saddled with RM2.03mil in rental arrears due to the failure of tenants at two PPR to settle their monthly rent to the local authorities (PBT).

MBS Mayor Datuk Masri Razali said residents of the two projects, Pangsapuri Rakyat Seri Perdana Paroi and Rumah Pangsa Kos Rendah Lobak, had amassed rental arrears of RM1.1mil and RM930,000, respectively.

Last year, Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) had reportedly said that it was incurring rental arrears totalling RM29.8mil due to the reluctance of PPR and PA tenants under its jurisdiction to pay rent.

The arrears were owed to the PBT by 21,000 tenants from a total of 40,000 dwellers at the PPR and PA.

DBKL has taken several proactive measures against errant ten-

ants. Among others, it has introduced a Revenue Recovery Action Plan comprising various initiatives to ensure rent arrears are managed effectively to deal with problem tenants.

Simmy Chan, 35, who is a resident of a PPR unit in Seremban, claimed that there were some PPR tenants who deliberately stayed for free without considering their responsibility to settle their monthly rent.

She said that as a result of the lack of firm action from the relevant authorities, these tenants felt that they were not obliged to pay their rent.

"Most residents of this PPR flat that I am staying in are from the younger generation who are able-bodied, but perhaps due to the lack of action from the authorities, they take advantage of the situation by not paying their rent," she told Bernama.

"Some of them are no longer working. They use this as an excuse not to settle their dues and assume that this is not an offence as no action has been taken against them," said Chan, who is renting the PPR unit for only

RM150 a month.

Prof Dr Ahmad Hariza Hashim from the Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia, opined that PPR tenants are obliged to inform the relevant authorities of their situation if they are having difficulties in paying their rent.

"Tenants should discuss with the relevant agencies, which can help them in the rental payment process if they do not have the financial resources or are not working due to health factors.

"In this regard, the question arises as to why no action has been taken by the relevant authorities when tenants are left without paying their rent for years.

"Perhaps efforts had been taken earlier but without follow-up action by the PBT, tenants tend to be bold enough not to pay their rent," he said.

Prof Ahmad Hariza said the authorities should take appropriate action against tenants who default on their rent for housing provided by the government to prevent them from "normalising" their bad practices.

Some of the measures that can be taken include imposing an eviction order on tenants through the law and court proceedings, if they deliberately default on their rent.

"I feel that tenants should be reminded of their responsibility as the monthly rent can be utilised for maintenance and flat repairs. A solid source of finance will indirectly create a liveable housing environment," he said.

Prof Ahmad Hariza said resident associations in the area should also play a role towards helping the PBT explain and educate tenants on the importance of paying their rent.

A lecturer from the Real Estate Division at College of Built Environment, UiTM, Nor Adibah Mohd Arif proposed that the Central Database System (Padu) be utilised to identify the profiles of tenants of government housing schemes.

She said that Padu could assist PBT and the government in checking the background and eligibility criteria of tenants in addition to conducting periodic assessment of their household income.

She said if a tenant was unable to pay the rent due to financial problems, assistance could be channelled to the group in an accurate manner.

"Padu is a database which has a profile of citizens and permanent residents in Malaysia and, as such, it would be easier for the relevant agency to assess the tenants' data.

"This approach indirectly facilitates the process of providing assistance to the target groups by the government agencies," Nor Adibah said.

She also said that the system would indirectly prevent non-eligible individuals from taking advantage of the benefits provided for low-income earners under the PPR.

"The Residential Tenancy Act, which is expected to be tabled in Parliament this year, is said to be among the best solutions to address the issue.

"This is because the law will protect the rights of owners and tenants as well as provide opportunities for the PBT to conduct enforcement on the respective premises," she added.