



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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CONDITIONS OF FLATS IN MALAYSIA ARE SLUM-LIKE

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) would like to express our growing concern for the living conditions in low, medium cost flats; conditions that can only be labelled as deplorable. This is a fact we were able to establish from the brief survey we conducted at low, medium cost flats in Penang – both on the mainland and the island.

Reports about the awful living conditions in these flats are something that has been appearing in the news for a very long time. However, despite the numerous news appearances these living conditions are still the reality for residents of low and medium cost flats.

CAP being troubled by the shocking news about low, medium cost flats – such as the string of incidents where children fell to their deaths when rusty railings gave way or the garbage disposal areas that are filled with rodents and foul smelling substances – decided to conduct a brief survey on the matter.

The survey we conducted took place at 3 low, medium cost flats on the mainland and 5 on the island. Our findings were obtained from interviewing the residents at the mentioned flats and through the observation of our officers who carried out the survey.

Based on our survey, we were able to determine that the conditions in low cost and medium cost flats have become slum-like. **The following list summarizes the major problems we discovered with the living conditions in low, medium-cost flats:**

- Overcrowding of small units by big families or foreign workers
- Bad design of these high-rise buildings
- Inadequate natural lighting and ventilation for residents
- No proper rubbish disposal system
- Bad maintenance of public areas and facilities
- Broken down lifts remain unfixed for lengthy periods of time
- Cleanliness level is very poor.
- Misuse of public spaces.
- Rundown and unsafe playgrounds, car parks and compounds.
- CCTV(s) that do not work.
- Rodents everywhere.
- Blackouts in the corridors

Our survey, though brief, is enough to show that the conditions in low cost and medium cost houses are a serious problem that has to be dealt with immediately, especially since more and more people seem to be moving towards flat dwelling.

An obvious step towards better living conditions for flat dwellers would be for Malaysia to emulate countries that have perfected their public housing system – our neighbouring country Singapore would be a very good example to learn from. In Singapore, flats are mainly maintained and managed by their respective Town Councils.

This begs the question of what the Commissioners of Buildings (COB) of our various states - which seems to share similar functions as Singapore's Town Councils - are doing to improve the conditions of our flats. Instead of conditions getting better, they just seem to be getting worse; and this leads us to the question of whether or not the COBs of each state are actually fulfilling the roles they have been given.

Given these points, CAP urges the Malaysian government to employ corrective measures immediately to change the slum-like state of our low, medium cost flats. Our recommendations for the improvement of living conditions in these flats include:-

- An in depth and nationwide, government driven survey is needed to determine the problems faced by residents in low, medium cost flats.
- Government to take over the management and maintenance of all low cost and medium cost flats, such as Singapore's Town Councils have done.
- The role of the Commissioner of Buildings department (part of local councils) needs to be reviewed and improved, to ensure that it is still relevant and useful.
- Low, medium cost flats should not be equated with low-quality and overcrowded housing. They should be practical, affordable and fulfil the needs of the residents; again Singapore is a good example for us.

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President

Consumers Association of Penang