



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang
Consumers Association of Penang
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Letter to the Editor

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Malaysia must return to prefab low and low-medium cost homes

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) urges the government to revert to prefabricated low and low-medium cost flats and apartments. Malaysia adopted a prefabricated building system (also known as 'prefab') in the late 1960s, building low-cost flats in Kuala Lumpur and Penang, being the first Asian country to do so.

Rifle Range, Kampung Melayu, and Noordin Street Ghaut flats in Penang; and Jalan Pekeliling flats in Kuala Lumpur were among the earliest prefab buildings in the country.

Although there are problems related to IBS such as the high cost of initially developing manufacturing facilities for the production of the building components, it can be cost-effective if buildings are mass produced and complete the construction within a very much shorter time.

Given these advantages, prefabs will help to reduce the cost of low- to medium cost flats/apartments. Other distinct advantages of adopting prefabs are to wean Malaysia's dependence on foreign labour in the construction sector and more importantly, factory-manufactured components are more consistent in quality.

The versatility of a prefab building's design can vary depending on several factors, including the type of prefab system used, the manufacturer's capabilities, and its specific design requirements.

If the construction of prefabs can be achieved at a much lower cost, the savings can benefit Bottom 40 (B40) and Middle 40 (M40) income house buyers. At the current housing prices, those, particularly from the B40 category, may find difficulty in obtaining bank loans and this may be a factor in low-cost flats overhang.

We urge the government to seriously consider adopting prefabricated housing systems that will benefit almost everyone in terms of lower construction cost and selling price, accelerated delivery timeline, and quality.

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