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24 families of estate workers given new homes in Semenyih

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By TARRENCE TAN



Arutchelvan described the occasion as a victory for the people and expressed joy that the former estate workers had new homes.

SEMEYIH: After nearly two decades of struggle, 24 families from the Ladang Bangi estate have finally been offered keys to their new homes - thanks to assistance from Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM).

The 24 families were handed over the keys to their new homes last Thursday (Feb 14), just two days before the nomination day for the Semenyih by-election.

For 19 years, the 24 families faced court trials, constant harassment by gangsters to vacate their homes, and some were even thrown into jail by the authorities for fighting for their rights.

C Krishan, 64, who led the action committee for the Ladang Bangi estate workers, said he was touched by the occasion, as it has been an arduous journey.

"We are really happy. We have taken the keys and we will move in by March when the water supply is connected.

"The house even came equipped with a refrigerator, TV, cabinet, and air-conditioners," he said during a press conference, accompanied by PSM central committee member S. Arutchelvan at the Putra apartments on Wednesday (Feb 20).

Arutchelvan described the occasion as a victory for the people and expressed joy.

"Their units are special, they have free cabinets, TVs and fridges. Even I am staying in a low-cost unit and I don't have such facilities," he quipped.

Arutchelvan said that similar cases such as the families in the Ladang Bangi estate will keep on happening in future if the state government does not address the issue by enacting laws to protect estate workers.

He pointed out that in 1973, former premier Tun Abdul Razak had initiated the Estate Workers Scheme to ensure that workers were protected once they are evicted when development starts in an estate.

However, he lamented that because it's merely a policy instead of a law, it had caused many developers to skip their responsibilities of providing homes for estate workers.

"99% of the time, estate owners don't do it, simply because it's not a law, but just a policy," he added.

According to Arutchelvan, PSM had asked the state government to introduce laws to ensure that developers build houses for estate workers before evicting them.

"Most importantly, we must have laws to protect the marginalised communities. Of course, many other estate workers went empty-handed.

"But those who fought such as the Ladang Bangi estate workers ended up with a free house. So that is a big victory," he said.

All the families will now be relocated by developer Trans Loyal Development Sdn Bhd to their new homes in Putra apartments in Taman Impian Putra Bangi, Kajang in March this year.

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