

Samy: Subra's no loss

by Bernard Cheah
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SEBERANG PERAI: MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu says the party is not affected by former vice-president Datuk S.S. Subramaniam's move to quit and join Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR).

"I congratulate the former Segamat MP. His resignation is no loss to the MIC," he said.

"He has not been serving or contributing to the party or the Indian community. We do not feel a sense of loss. It is up to him what he wants to do in PKR," said Samy Vellu.

Subramaniam recently announced his entry to PKR in a function in Taman Medan, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, claiming that 10 MIC branches in the Klang Valley, with 1,700 members, will follow suit.

"Only 300 members quit the party. This is a bluff," said Samy Vellu in a press conference before officiating at the Penang MIC 63rd Convention here yesterday. On another matter, Samy said MIC may amend the party's constitution to reduce the minimum number of members required to form a branch.

'Don't build prayer houses indiscriminately'

TAIPING: Malaysians are advised not to build houses of worship illegally and indiscriminately as this could lead to unnecessary tensions when such structures are demolished by the authorities.

Deputy Minister in Prime Minister's Department Datuk T. Murugiah said those wishing to build such structures should get prior approval from the authorities.

Speaking to about 2,000 worshippers at the Sri Mariamman Temple here during a special prayer in conjunction with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak's 56th birthday, he said although Malaysians can practice their religion freely, it did not mean they can build houses of worship anywhere they liked. - Bernama

New hope in abandoned projects

Analysis by Ng Kee Seng
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OVERSHADOWED by last week's headline grabbing news of political aide Teoh Beng Hock's death while in the "custody" of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission was an announcement that deserved mention and attention.

Deserving because it concerned the revival of an abandoned housing project in Penang, an issue that involves the hard-earned savings of the man-in-the-street.

Malaysia is notoriously famous for abandoned housing projects due to poor regulatory management and lack of political will.

It's an issue that has shattered the hearts of many Malaysians for decades, while unscrupulous and irresponsible developers, exploiting the loopholes of existing laws, get away scot-free.

What makes the announcement worthy of mention is that it was made by a Pakatan Rakyat (PR) state government led by the DAP.

What the Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon Gerakan-led Penang Barisan Nasional (BN) government could not resolve in 12 years, Lim Guan Eng and his executive councillors delivered in a few months.

After several meetings with the Bellevue Group, the state government succeeded in sealing a deal with the "white knight" developer to revive the Taman Cemerlang housing project.

Taman Cemerlang was abandoned in 1998, leaving about 1,200 buyers in the lurch. They had paid between 10% and 20% of the purchase price.

Lim said Bellevue would repay RM40 million outstanding loan to the charge bank owed by the previous project developer, Penangan

Maju, which wound up in 1999.

In addition, the buyers will receive compensation of 50% of the purchase price and if they wish to buy into the new development project, they will be given a cash discount of RM5,000 each.

Bellevue's subsidiary, Lembaman Development Sdn Bhd, is to turn Taman Cemerlang into a RM400 million mixed development project.

A few kilometres away is the infamous Majestic Heights, Penang's largest abandoned mixed development project which shattered the dreams of about 6,000 people to own a home.

Koh had, three general elections ago, promised and assured Majestic Heights buyers that his government would revive the project, probably with the help of a "white knight".

It will do well for the BN government to do some soul searching

and rationalise the current Penang government's successful revival of Taman Cemerlang.

The answer is really not too mind boggling - transparency and sincerity in resolving the plight of the man in the street.

Besides Taman Cemerlang, Penang Town and Country Planning, Housing and Arts Committee chairman Wong Hon Wai said there were a total of 21 abandoned projects in the state with 14 in "very problematic position".

Wong said five projects, including Taman Cemerlang, are being revived while two others have been completed, awaiting occupancy certificates.

There is now hope for the victims of unscrupulous developers in the state and it will surely be a feather in the cap for the PR government if it succeeds in the case of Majestic Heights.

Illegal foggers spread to KL

Worldwide protests against Teheran regime pg 8

by Liew-Ann Phang
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KUALA LUMPUR: While Selangor deals with reports that 80% of the pest control operators in the state are illegal, City Hall (DBKL) has found itself having to deal with the same allegations.

This time, of the 18 operators for the various zones in the city, the Pest Control Association Malaysia (PCAM) said only four are legal and possess an applicator's licence by the Pesticides Board, as of late last month.

President Ang Tan Loong told *theSun* the association does not intend to step on anyone's toes or deprive them of their bread and butter.

"However, it is increasingly important that fogging activities had the elements of the right dosages and concentration in pesticides in the constant battle against dengue.

"We don't mind them doing their business as long as they know what they're doing," he said.

Ang holds strong to his belief that non-professionals will be of no help in the fight against dengue as mosquitoes develop resistance, even in their short lifespan of up to 10 days so it is necessary for operators to be licensed and are qualified to apply

pesticides, as permitted by the Pesticides Board.

"When they breed and their lifespan expires, their larvae already have developed resistance so the correct amount of chemicals is essential," he added.

Ang also expressed concern over the public being "punished" by the authorities as illegal fogging is being carried out at residential areas.

"It has already been reported that residential contributes only 2% of the outbreaks and the areas that should be of concern are construction areas, office buildings and other such places and yet, fogging is continuously done in residential areas," he added.

The next step the PCAM is taking is to highlight the names of the firms involved to the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry's Pesticides Board for action to be taken.

"It is high time they go to the ground and bring these culprits which incidentally

have no regard for the law," he said.

Kepong MP Dr Tan Seng Giaw, when contacted, said reports of the illegal operators have been around a long-time and might be a phenomenon nationwide.

"This figure is worrying. It's a scam and there must be concerted efforts against illegal fogging companies especially since it exposes the risk of aggravating the outbreak instead of containing it or curbing it," he said.

Mayor Datuk Ahmad Fuad Ismail could not be reached for a response.

Last month, the Health Ministry said dengue was on the increase with 748 cases in Kuala Lumpur. Selangor and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur were reported to be two out of the three states with the highest recorded number of deaths this year due to dengue.

Selangor recorded 45 deaths while Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya had seven deaths each.

Cuepacs wants to take over loan deductions function

KUALA LUMPUR: Cuepacs wants to take over the monthly deduction service for government sector loans from the National Cooperative Movement, Angkasa, with an eye on the lucrative commission of some RM4 billion a year.

This is to enable the congress to utilise the commission from the service to benefit the 1.2 million civil servants.

Cuepacs secretary-general Ahmad Shah Mohd Zin said Angkasa was raking in some RM8.1 billion a year in commission by providing the deduction service for both the government and private sectors.

"Of this amount, 50% is contributed by civil servants through their various deductions," he said.

Angkasa charges 2.5% of the loan amount monthly as commission for its service.

"What we are proposing to the government is to allow Cuepacs to take over the deduction service for loans of civil servants and let Angkasa continue with the service for the private sector. If the proposal is accepted, it will allow Cuepacs to earn about RM4 billion annually from the service," he said.

This earning, he said, would be channelled back to the civil servants through a foundation in the form of scholarships, medical aid, grants and other financial and material assistance.

"Assistance can also be given to government retirees, thus reducing the burden on the government. This is a win-win situation, as both civil servants and the government will benefit from the scheme," he said.

Ahmad Shah pointed out that Angkasa had not contributed "anything to civil

servants" despite earning such huge sums from them.

He said Cuepacs had the capability of taking over the deductions and all it needed was some initial assistance from the government to set up the infrastructure.

"Maybe the government can give us a soft loan which we can easily repay within a short period when our system is up and running," he said.

Bernama understands both the Treasury and Accountant-General's Office are receptive to the proposal and will assist Cuepacs if the government approves the scheme.

"Setting up the infrastructure is not a big deal and it can be done easily as the basics are already in place," said a source in Mampu (Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit). - Bernama



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