

Drug addicts make City Hall flats their haunt

Residents upset and living in fear

BY BAVANI M
bavanim@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR City Hall (DBKL) has come under fire for neglecting the vacant units at its public housing flats which has become a haunt for drug addicts.

For years, residents living in various City Hall flats have had to put up with drug addicts as their neighbours as numerous complaints made to the local authority had fallen on deaf ears.

A resident, who has been living in the San Peng flats, called *Star Metro* to complain that drug addicts had taken over the vacant units and that some were using the location to push drugs.

Resident Grace Joseph, who lives on the same floor as one addict, said that even though the addicts did not disturb her, she was living in fear for her life.

"You never know what may happen. One day they may just attack us if they are unable to get their daily fix," said the 25-year-old sales clerk.

According to another resident Azizah Osman, whose unit is right next door to a vacant unit and which is now occupied by an addict, she is unable to understand why DBKL is unable to control the situation.

"Almost all the vacant units have been taken over by addicts. The doors of these units have either been torn down or broken into.

"They (addicts) bring their junk and rubbish at night and it is very unhealthy," said the 55-year-old.

Resident Rani Govindasamy said she was sick and tired of complaining to City Hall about the matter as nothing was being done to solve the problem.

"The vacant units are left unlocked



No door: One of the vandalised vacant units at San Peng flats.



Earthy tone: The exterior of the San Peng flats was recently given a fresh coat of paint.

Danger: Wires hanging from the ceiling and an electric circuit box left open is upsetting residents.

»It took a lot of begging as well as help from Seputeh MCA to get the units and when we moved in, we were shocked to find that many of the vacant units are being used by drug addicts«

SIVAGAMY MUTHU

and left to rot. I have asked them (DBKL officers) to fix the grilles or padlock the units so as to prevent break-ins.

"But the standard answer that I get from the officers stationed there is *Kalau you nak, you tukar sendiri* (you want, you change it yourself). This *tidak apa* attitude has got to stop," said Rani.

Meanwhile, San Peng flats are not the only ones affected. Squatters from Kg Maya in Sg Besi who had been relocated to the nearby Raya Permai flats have also complained that vacant units have been taken over by addicts.

Resident Sivagamy Muthu said the residents had been trying for a long time to get units in Raya Permai from the DBKL.

"It took a lot of begging as well as help from Seputeh MCA to get the units and when we moved in, we were shocked to find that many of the vacant units are being used by drug addicts.

"Come at night and you will find them at these units high on drugs," Sivagamy said.

Apart from the problem of drug



addicts, San Peng residents are also angry that DBKL is not doing anything to maintain the flats.

They said the living condition at the flats was bad and that they could not live in peace.

"Wires are hanging from everywhere, garbage is never collected on time and break-ins are a common occurrence," said Grace.

Meanwhile, Cheras MP Tan Kok Wai slammed City Hall for not putting up more of the flats for sale or rent to deserving candidates.

"There are people who have applied for units and who have been put on the waiting list for years. They should allow them to rent these units," Tan said.

"By allowing the vacant units to be taken over by drug addicts is creating an unhealthy environment for the residents living there.

"City Hall should take care of its tenants. By not doing so, it is a blow to their reputation as the city man-

agers," he said.

Many city residents who lived in public flats harbour hopes of buying over the units if given a chance.

"I have been waiting for 35 years to buy my own unit," said 70-year-old Joseph D'Cruz who lives in San Peng flats.

"DBKL should let us buy these vacant units rather than allow the units to be used by drug addicts," he said.

When contacted, DBKL's Housing and Management Department director Abdul Samad Lope Pihie said he would be sending a team to fix the doors and grilles of the vacant units as soon as possible.

He added that they were in the process of relocating squatters to these empty units.

There are some 35,000 public units in Kuala Lumpur and the Federal Government had announced the sale of only 42% or 15,007 units to city folks.



Dirty sight: Some of the junk found in vacant units at the San Peng flats.