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NGOs hoping for a better, safer, worry-free New Year

**PUNITHA KUMAR
AND D. KANYAKUMARI
EXPECTATIONS:**

Groups tell of what they're grateful for and what they're looking forward to in the future

THE slew of goodies rolled out by the government, in particular the 1Malaysia Housing Programme (PR1MA), was a resounding success, National Housebuyers Association secretary-general Chang Kim Loong says.

Housing issues had been long overdue, he said, while congratulating the government for heeding the people's call for more affordable housing.

"Although it is a good move to unlock land banks for this housing scheme, I am worried about its implementation.

"The government should ensure that all PR1MA buyers are protected under the Housing Development (control and licensing) Act 1966 or else, they cannot seek legal redress with the Tribunal for Homebuyer Claims if problems arise."

Persatuan Pemandu Teksi Muhibbah KL president Vealautham Suppiah hoped the government would hold talks with cab drivers before implementing policies relevant to the industry.

"How will the government know of our problems if they do not sit and talk with us?

"I also hope taxi drivers will not be blamed as a whole when only a handful of errant cabbies do not charge according to the meters or commit unlawful acts."

The All Women's Action Society (Awam) president Ho Yock Lin said the society advocated the same message every new year.

"We wish for a nation that is free of discrimination, that promotes equality and for its citizens to pos-

sess a high level of integrity."

Alluding to the brutal gang-rape case in India which resulted in the death of the 23-year-old victim, Ho said Malaysian rape laws should be amended.

"All, including the government, police and the private sector, must work together to help end violence against women."

Sharing similar sentiments was Bukit Bandaraya Residents' Association president Mumtaz Ali, who said badly-lit streets and lack of security in housing areas could lead to unwanted incidences.

"I urge local councils to work with residents' associations to install closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in neighbourhoods and not just commercial areas.

"These CCTVs should be linked to the local councils and would boost security in residential areas."

National Sports Council director-general Datuk Zolkples Embong's wish-list was for more support to produce top-notch athletes.

"State sports councils and schools must come together and groom talented players."

He said the country should not rely on foreign coaches, but improve the level of local coaching.

Although the government had carried out numerous efforts to ease the burden of the low-income group, Universiti Utara Malaysia (international studies) dean Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani said Malaysians should not be too dependent on the government for goodies and subsidies.

"The people must learn how to generate income for themselves and contribute to the nation's financial growth, and not just wait for handouts from the government."

Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) deputy president Mohd

Jaafar Majid said he hoped for a higher minimum wage in the coming years.

"We hope for more stable job opportunities, which will reward workers with decent pay.

"We are grateful to the government for the 60 years retirement age for private sector workers and we look forward to more employee-friendly measures in the coming years."

National Union Of the Teaching Profession president Hashim Adnan said the government should look into hiring retired teachers to teach in schools.

"These teachers are aware of the local culture and practices. Paying them instead of hiring foreign teachers would also benefit the government in terms of taxes."

Hashim said the government should also allow graduates with Masters degrees and doctorates from local universities to develop the country's education system.

Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (Cuepacs) president

Datuk Omar Osman said civil servants' hopes were to enhance productivity and get end corruption.

Omar said Cuepacs would continue to work closely with the government to fulfil the needs of the people.

National Press Club president Mokhtar Hussein hoped the new year would bring about a better environment for media personnel to work in.

"We hope for improved collaboration from all related fields so that we can deliver the news to the people efficiently, without fear or favour.

"Press freedom is something we seek every year and we would like a bit more of that in 2013."

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*A crowd gathering around a model of a house during a PR1MA event in Batu Gajah. Many have lauded the move to **provide affordable housing** for the people through this government initiative.*