



25 JAN, 2025

New tribunal can help with rogue tenants

The Star, Malaysia



New tribunal can help with rogue tenants

Nga: Issues like unpaid bills can be brought for resolution

By **ZAKIAH KOYA**
zakiah@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Landlords who have been saddled with huge electricity bills run up by rogue tenants can find a solution soon with the setting up of a Residential Tenancies Tribunal under the proposed Residential Tenancy Act (RTA).

The tribunal will hear and handle claims, providing remedies for landlords and tenants, says Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming.

"The ministry is drafting the RTA, which aims to regulate the relationship between landlords and tenants.

"This Act aims to ensure that both parties fulfil their rights and obligations, from the pre-agreement, the subsistence of the agreement and at the termination of the agreement," he said.

On Wednesday, a group of landlords from Gopeng, Manjung and Sitiawan held a press conference about their predicament after having fallen victim to tenants who had illegal electricity connections.

The tenants, who were allegedly involved in cryptocurrency mining, had left unpaid bills ranging from RM30,000 to RM1.2mil.

Nga explained that under the proposed RTA, the tenant must pay all utility charges like electricity, water, sewerage and any other services as agreed between the parties.

"In the event that the tenant fails to fulfil these obligations, the landlord can seek an order from the tribunal, which will serve as a platform to resolve disputes efficiently and cost-effectively.

"I advise all Malaysians to prepare a comprehensive tenancy agreement that clearly outlines

the rights and responsibilities of both parties before renting out their properties.

"It is also important to screen potential tenants by verifying their identification, employment status and credit history to minimise risks.

"Maintaining open and clear communication with tenants can also help ensure that any issues are resolved quickly," said Nga.

National House Buyers Association secretary-general Datuk Chang Kim Loong com-

mended the plan for a tribunal, saying it would be a cheaper, quasi-legal platform in lieu of the courts.

"The tribunal is supposed to be a cheap, speedy and simple platform to seek legal redress.

"However, the proposed RTA has incomprehensible sections. Some of these provisions are not only unnecessary but are also harmful to the average property stakeholder," said Chang.

He pointed out a proposed RTA clause where deposits of two

months' rental and one month of utility would not go to landlords but would instead be parked with a government agency.

"This deposit would be returned to landlords only upon the expiry of the tenancy, provided there are no expenses to be deducted. If there is any dispute, the matter would be referred to the tribunal.

"Keeping the money in a government account would prevent the landlord and the tenant from accessing their money when they need it most," he said.