

KUALA LUMPUR, OCT. 14 (BERNAMA) -- STATE LAND COUNCILS WILL BE SET UP IN ALL PENINSULAR MALAYSIA STATES TO DETERMINE A POLICY TO OVERCOME THE SQUATTER PROBLEM WHICH VARIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

THE COUNCILS WILL BE CHAIRED BY THE MENTRIS BESAR OR CHIEF MINISTERS OF THE RESPECTIVE STATES. EACH WILL HAVE A SECRETARIAT AND A COMMITTEE TO ENABLE IT TO OPERATE EFFECTIVELY.

THE DECISION TO FORM THE COUNCILS WAS TAKEN AT A MEETING OF THE NATIONAL LAND COUNCIL CHAIRED BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, UDR. MAHATHIR MOHAMMED, AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE TODAY.

DR. MAHATHIR TOLD NEWSMEN THAT THE COUNCILS HAD TO BE FORMED TO FIND SUITABLE AND EFFECTIVE WAYS TO OVERCOME THE SQUATTER PROBLEM WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS +TOUGH AND NOT EASY TO SOLVE.+

IT NEEDS THOROUGH STUDY, VARYING WITH EACH STATE, AND MUCH TIME, HE SAID. -- BERNAMA MORE 1333/LK

DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE COMMITTEE FORMED BY THE NATIONAL LAND COUNCIL AT ITS LAST MEETING HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO DRAW UP CERTAIN GUIDELINES TO OVERCOME THE SQUATTER PROBLEM.

+THE SQUATTER PROBLEM IS A SERIOUS SOCIAL PROBLEM BECAUSE EACH PERSON IN THE COUNTRY NEEDS A SHELTER, WHETHER IT BE LEGAL OR ILLEGAL, + HE SAID.

+THEREFORE, WE MUST FIND WAYS OF PROVIDING THE NECESSARY SHELTER, + HE ADDED.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SAID THE GREATEST PROBLEM FACED BY THE GOVERNMENT WAS THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO BUILT SQUATTER HOMES AS SOON AS THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEGUN EFFORTS TO PROVIDE ALTERNATE HOMES FOR OTHER SQUATTERS.

ANOTHER PROBLEM WAS THE +SQUATTER DEVELOPERS+ WHO PROVIDED PREFABRICATED HOUSES FOR SQUATTER FAMILIES, HE SAID.

DR. MAHATHIR WARNED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE STERN ACTION AGAINST THESE +DEVELOPERS+ IF IT COULD BE PROVEN THAT THEY RESORTED TO SUCH ACTIVITIES. -- BERNAMA MORE 1345/LK

DR. MAHATHIR CRITICISED THE ATTITUDE OF CERTAIN POLITICIANS WHO USED THE SQUATTER PROBLEM FOR THEIR OWN GAINS.

+THESE POLITICIANS NOT ONLY ENCOURAGED THE PEOPLE TO BECOME SQUATTERS BUT ALSO FOUGHT FOR THEM, + HE SAID.

IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO ACT TO PROVE THEIR INVOLVEMENT BECAUSE THEY WASHED THEIR HANDS OFF THE MATTER IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS, HE SAID.

IN VIEW OF THESE PROBLEMS, THE GOVERNMENT NEEDED TIME TO FIND WAYS AND DETERMINE WHETHER TO TIGHTEN LAWS OR PRODUCE AN EFFECTIVE MACHINERY TO OVERCOME THE PROBLEM, HE SAID.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE COUNCIL ALSO DISCUSSED LEASING OF LAND AT TODAY'S MEETING.

THE COUNCIL DECIDED AGAINST DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OFFICERS AND THE ORDINARY PEOPLE IN THE LEASING OF LAND, WHETHER FOR 30, 60 OR 99 YEARS. -- BERNAMA MORE 1356/LK

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DIFFERENTIATION COULD CAUSE DISSATISFACTION AMONG THE PEOPLE. HOWEVER, THE ISSUE OF LEASES WOULD DEPEND ON THE RESPECTIVE STATE GOVERNMENTS.

CHIEF MINISTERS AND MENTRIS BESAR FROM PENINSULAR MALAYSIA, CABINET MINISTERS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL AND OBSERVERS FROM SABAH AND SARAWAK WERE PRESENT AT THE MEETING. -- BERNAMA 1358/LK