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Land

CABINET ORDERS STUDY ON DEVELOPMENT OF MALAY RESERVE LAND

KUANTAN, Oct 17 (Bernama) -- The Cabinet has directed the Land and Cooperative Development Ministry to conduct an immediate study on ways to develop Malay reserve land and if necessary, to set up an implementation body or agency to develop the land.

The ministry's parliamentary secretary, Datuk Fauzi Abdul Rahman, said today the study would also look into whether there was a need to carry out the development through joint ventures with non-bumiputeras.

If the study found that the bumiputeras were not yet capable of developing the land themselves, the provision in the National Land Code prohibiting non-bumiputeras developing Malay reserve land might be amended, he told reporters after opening a Rakan Muda camp in Balok, near here.

He said the Malays did not have adequate economic strength and the technical know-how to develop the land.

He said the directive was issued at yesterday's Cabinet meeting and the post-Cabinet meeting directed the Director-General of Lands and Mines to conduct the study.

Fauzi said the report on the study would be completed before the year end and if the Cabinet approved it, work to develop the Malay reserve land would start next year.

"It would be a loss for us to own the land and yet leave it idle without making any effort to develop it," he said.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also Umno president, when winding up the debate at the Umno general assembly on Oct 12, said the Malays should not be proud of the Malay reserve land because it was not a mark of their superiority but an insult to them in their own country.

He said the reserve land could be retained but would not bring any honour if the Malays continued to be limited in capability and unable to compete with the other races.

Fauzi said that because land came under the jurisdiction of the state governments, they should also have their own approaches and policies to develop the Malay reserve land.

He said the Pahang government had succeeded in its approach to develop Malay reserve land, especially the coastal areas, by helping and encouraging tourism-oriented development projects which had raised the value of the land and brought higher returns to its owners.

He also said that the government had no plans to abolish the National Land Code or the state enactments on Malay reserve land as long as the Malays did not have the economic strength and still needed such land.

Fauzi said that although Malay reserve land fetched a lower market price than non-reserve land, the government paid the same value for reserve land acquired for development.

The land acquired must also be replaced with one of similar size in another area, he added. -- BERNAMA

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