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Land-States

STATES SUPPORT MOVE TO PUT IDLE LAND INTO PRODUCTIVE USE

KUALA LUMPUR, July 5 (Bernama) -- Several states today announced steps to identify idle land for agricultural development on a commercial basis.

They welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday that the government wishes to take over idle land belonging to individuals and turn it into productive use.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the owners will benefit as they will be given shares as well as dividends derived from the overall profits.

In IPOH, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib said there are 9,200 hectares of idle land in the state, mostly in Malay Reserve Areas.

He said district officers had been directed to identify such land in their areas that could be developed commercially.

The state government would develop idle land until such a time when the owners come forward to claim them.

"They can claim the land if they undertake to develop it and pay the necessary fine and quit rent," he told reporters at a cheque presentation ceremony.

Ramli said the state government had in the past achieved some successes in developing idle land such as a case in Kampung Gajah where a 48-hectare piece of land was claimed by some 70 relatives several years ago.

The land title was transferred to a company formed by them to develop the land into an oil palm estate which is now a success, he said.

Ramli said while it was not a problem to develop big plots of idle land, the challenge was to find solutions in developing small pieces of land scattered cross the state.

In SEREMBAN, the Negeri Sembilan government is encouraging owners of idle land, especially the "tanah adat" under the matriarchal inheritance system, to merge their property for commercial projects.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad said there are presently over 6,000 hectares of idle land in the state, and a majority of these are the tanah adat usually with several owners to a small plot.

"Problems often crop up when the various land owners could not be contacted or their consensus obtained to develop the property," he told reporters after launching the state-level Malaysian Incorporated.

Isa said the state government had in fact directed all district officers to discuss with heads of the various clans to persuade the land owners to merge their property for development.

"Only with this approach, such idle land could be developed for commercial, industrial or agricultural purposes," he said, adding that the state government has in the past developed 48 per cent of idle land for commercial agriculture.

In KUALA TERENGGANU, Terengganu Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad said the state government may use idle land in the state to grow timber wood of high commercial value including teak and "sentang" species.

The government has the right to take over any idle land if the owner could not afford to develop the property or was reluctant to cooperate with others to develop the land, he told reporters at a family day function near here.

In SHAH ALAM, Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib said the state government is studying the best approach to develop idle land, especially those with far too many owners and those whose owners are difficult to trace after many generations.

He said Selangor is facing the same problem as other states with regard to idle land, despite the soaring land prices in some of its districts in the wake of massive industrial development.

"We are studying the matter and will make a proposal on how to deal with the problem," he told reporters. -- BERNAMA

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