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Osu - land

MORE STRINGENT CONTROL ON LAND ACQUISITION SOON

KOTA KINABALU, May 24 (Bernama) -- State governments will find it tough to acquire lands from the people once the amended Land Acquisition Act receives royal consent and comes into effect, said Land and Cooperative Development Minister Datuk Osu Sukam.

He said the Act would provide for a more stringent control in order to prevent state governments from misusing power to acquire people's land and later selling them to a third party for a profit.

"Apparently some state governments had not followed the procedures resulting in affected landowner going to court to seek redress for alleged short-changed in payment of compensation," he said, adding that misuse of powers on the matter was quite rampant.

Osu was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement in London yesterday that some state governments had taken actions which were out of line with that of the federal government, especially over acquisitions of people's land.

Osu was accompanying the Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Sakaran Dandai to the New Straits Times photo exhibition on Umno's 50 years anniversary at Wisma Muis here today.

He said recently the federal government had made it easy for state governments to acquire land for development purposes but it soon discovered that some state governments acquired the land in order to sell and made profit at the expense of the landowners.

Osu said such case was quite rampant and the federal government viewed it seriously, prompting it to amend the Land Acquisition Act.

"We are aware of the outcry from landowners whose land were acquired by the state governments for development purposes when the land were resold to third party at a much higher price than the compensation paid to the landowners, he said.

He said the amended Act provided clearer guidelines to state government when acquiring land, and among others, would also give landowners chances to develop their land on their own or on joint-venture basis with private sectors.

"Only when the landowners could not develop their lands the Government will acquire them and pay compensation according to current land market price," he added.

In PORT DICKSON, Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad said the state government has stopped acquiring land for development since last year.

"Even before that, land acquisition has all along been based on how important the development, and according to market price," he told newsmen when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's statement.

In KUALA KANGSAR, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib told reporters the state government would see to it that its agencies did not abuse the existing Act to take over people's land for quick profit.

The state government viewed with concern Dr Mahathir's statement, he said and pledged that future acquisitions by its agencies would comply with Federal Government guidelines.

In KANGAR, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said the state government was not involved in any misuse of land for profit as was reported to have occurred in some states.

He said the state government had always ensured that any land

acquisition was not abused for the benefit of certain parties.

"If we acquire land for public utility projects we will ensure that such facilities are built there," he said.

According to Shahidan, what was happening in Perlis now was that people were illegally using government land such as permanent forest reserves and catchment areas. -- BERNAMA