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Opening up Malay reserve land (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The Government plans to develop Malay reserve land in the near future with non-Malays given the option to lease it for a maximum of 30 years, Deputy Land and Co-operative Development Minister Dr Goh Cheng Teik said today.

"However, land ownership would still be in Malay hands," he said when replying to points raised during debate at the Gerakan general assembly.

While the Government was expected to make a decision on the matter soon, Goh said feedback from the Malay community indicated that they were willing to allow Malay reserve land to be developed on a 30-year lease provided ownership did not change.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had, in last year's Umno general assembly, urged Malays to consider opening up Malay reserve land.

This was followed by active discussions and conferences by various Malay groups and individuals.

The feedback, according to Goh, was that the Malays agreed to open up the reserve land for development.

Malay reserve land can now be leased out for only three years, but Goh said the ruling discouraged development of the land, especially by non-Malays.

As of Jan 1, 1995, the size of Malay reserve land stood at 4.4 million hectares.

The largest and most valuable piece of Malay reserve land is in Kampung Baru, a century-old Malay village occupying 96.7ha of Kuala Lumpur's "Golden Triangle".

Goh, who is also Gerakan vice-president, said while the Government had yet to make a decision on the matter, an announcement would be made at an appropriate time.

He said the ministry, in the meantime, was reviewing the use of Malay reserve land.

"I am confident that Malay reserve land will be opened up for development in the near future," he said. "As land gets scarce, it is natural for people to focus on Malay reserve (land). There are a lot of opportunities for both Malays and non-Malays."

On the 26,000-member Koperasi Rakyat now under receivership, Goh said it would be revived by early next year.

Accounts of the co-operative are being audited and Bank Negara will soon apply to the High Court to end the receivership.

The Registrar of Co-operatives will form a committee to hold election of delegates to a national conference where a board of directors will be elected.

Koperasi Rakyat was placed under receivership in 1986 in the wake of problems such as mismanagement plaguing some of the deposit-taking co-operatives in the 1980s. Following a run, Koperasi Rakyat collapsed although it still retains RM1.5 million in cash.

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