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DRB-HICOM to use part of its land for farming

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The DRB-HICOM Group is expected to convert part of the land designated for the Proton City project in Ulu Behrang, Perak for agriculture purposes in support of the government's call for the private sector to use its land banks for agriculture activities to boost food production.

Officials from the company and Agriculture Ministry will visit the site today to determine whether it is suitable for such activities, sources told Business Times yesterday.

The company's officials had met Deputy Agriculture Minister Tengku Datuk Mahmud Mansor in Kuala Lumpur yesterday to discuss the matter.

The source said DRB-HICOM is one of 17 companies which have approached the ministry to seek technical expertise in the agricultural sector.

This, however, is a normal practice, the source added.

Agriculture Minister Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud had on Tuesday said that a public-listed company has earmarked its land initially marked for a non-agriculture project to cultivate vegetables.

"The company has a piece of land to be used for some projects but under the present economic situation, they cannot proceed with it.

"Rather than leave it as an empty land, they want to make full use of it," he had said.

Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had announced deferment of part of the the Proton City project last December in light of the current economic situation.

The 1,600ha in Ulu Behrang originally belonged to the Veterinary Department and was expected to be developed as a dairy breeding centre.

Following the Perak Government's issuance of title to DRB-HICOM for the land to be used as part of the Proton City project, the Agriculture Ministry had instead earmarked Pulau Tanjung as the dairy breeding centre while genetic studies will be undertaken in Lenggong.

Both sites are in Perak.

It will also be used for farming and managing of veterinary services, animal quarantine management, biochemical analysis and pathology.

The Proton City project, estimated to cost more than RM2 billion, is located about 3km from Tanjung Malim, 90km from Kuala Lumpur and 131km from Ipoh. It covers an area of 1,600ha.

Proton City Development Corp Sdn Bhd, had initially planned to build a car manufacturing plant, car component producing factories, housing for staff and public, and an eco-friendly recreational area at Proton City.

The first phase of the Proton City project, the car manufacturing plant and other support industries are scheduled to take shape by 1999 and will produce about 150,000 units of Proton cars a year.

The project was supposed to be the second manufacturing plant for Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Bhd.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had performed the ground-breaking ceremony for the project in 1996.

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