

18 JUN 1999

Feature-Orang Asli

BUKIT LANJAN LAND ACQUISITION SETS NEW STANDARD FOR ORANG ASLI

By: Cik Rashidah Abd Ghani

KUALA LUMPUR: Acquisition of land by the government for development is often met by complaints by land owners but not the Orang Asli of the Temuan tribe in Bukit Lanjan, near here.

The reason may lie with the attractive settlement package offered by the Selangor state government when their land was acquired for development. It may in fact been seen as a new standard in compensation for Orang Asli land.

The package comprises cash, modern housing, construction skills training for Orang Asli youths, an education trust fund for their children and other amenities.

The package guarantees a bright future for the Orang Asli community, not only for now, but also for generations to come. They will enjoy a more comfortable life with the trappings of modernisation to spark off a paradigm shift in their lives.

Following negotiations for the land acquisition, a package was finalised through a Memorandum of Understanding endorsed by the Selangor state government on Nov 28, 1996.

The pact involved three parties: the developer, Saujana Triangle Sdn Bhd (a member of the Emkay Group of Companies), the Village Development and Security Committee (JKKK) and Customs and Practices Board, representing the Bukit Lanjan Orang Asli community and the Orang Asli Affairs Department (JHEOA).

Under the agreement, the Selangor government allocated 256.44ha of land to Saujana Triangle for mixed development with certain conditions to benefit the Bukit Lanjan Orang Asli community.

They included an investment of RM45,000 per family in Amanah Saham Bumiputera (ASB), living allowance, resettlement expenses, compensation for cultivated crops, relocation of graves and allocation for the management of the JKKK and Customs and Practices Board.

The developer would also build for each of the 147 Orang Asli head of family in Bukit Lanjan a single-storey bungalow in a resettlement area covering 18ha in Bukit Lanjan.

The construction of the bungalows, with four to five rooms each, began in April and is due for completion at the end of next year.

This is the first time that the Temuan tribe is able to own property individually.

They would also be allocated 140 two-storey terrace houses in Sungai Buloh for them to let out to earn an income. Another 130 units of flats would be given to bachelors.

A fund, with an initial allocation of RM200,000, had been set up for the Orang Asli youth construction skills training programme. An RM8 million fund had also been established for the education of Bukit Lanjan Orang Asli children.

Ismael Chat, the "Batin" (headman) and chairman of the Bukit Lanjan Orang Asli JKKK, said that he and his people were grateful with the compensation which included a house.

"In the beginning we did not understand but now we know that the land acquisition was for development and we are satisfied with the settlement," he said.

The Bukit Lanjan Orang Asli are now undergoing a change, taking up jobs as office cleaners, plant nursery and restaurant workers among others, he

said.

Before, they gathered forest produce, caught fish and cultivated crops in a 0.4ha (one acre) plot per family earning about RM200 a month.

"So far, we are satisfied with what has happened," he said.

Prior to the land acquisition, the Bukit Lanjan Orang Asli settlement was made up of three villages -- Kampung Ujung (six ha), Kampung Luar (20-24ha) and Kampung Dalam (32-36ha). The area being developed currently is Kampung Ujung.

Currently, the first batch of 16 Orang Asli youngsters are undergoing training conducted by the Construction Industry Development Board through its training organ, Akademi Binaan Malaysia (Selangor) Sdn Bhd.

Saujana Triangle Corporate Affairs General Manager Abdullah Latiff said this was the first time that Orang Asli youths were receiving training in the construction industry. This idea was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad with an aim of giving them skills required in the construction industry.

This sort of training based on skills would enable them to get jobs in the construction industry, become contractors or entrepreneurs while raising their socio-economic standard and creating a paradigm shift in the community.

They were also receiving on-the-job training with building contractors and when they qualify from the programme they would work for projects undertaken by the Emkay Group of Companies.

Abdullah said they were also given the opportunity to build their own bungalows by doing the bricklaying, plastering and fixing tiles, among others.

A trainee, Norazman Jamalin, 18, said he hoped that the training would enable him to get a job in the construction sector where he could earn a high income to support his family.

Another youth, Azman Hamadan, 18, said that he would encourage his friends to enrol for the training programme.

"If possible, I would like to start my own business someday to show that an Orang Asli can also make it," he said. -- Bernama

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