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Call to acquire and develop all idle land

reports on "Dewan Rakyat" by Ramlan Said; Hayati Hayatudin; Ainon Mohd THE Government should acquire all idle land in the country and develop them into commercial, large-scale agriculture projects.

The projects can be awarded to any interested private companies, Abdul Rahman Sulaiman (BN-Parit Buntar) said when debating the Mid-Term Review of the Seventh Malaysia Plan.

He proposed that the Implementation Co-ordination Unit in the Prime Minister's Department and the Agriculture Ministry take up the project.

"It takes time to develop the agriculture sector on a large scale. The Government can use funds allocated under the National Land Code to streamline activities," Abdul Rahman said.

The Mid-Term Review was tabled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last week.

Among others, the review showed that the household income of Indians had increased to 16.3 per cent compared to Bumiputera (12.7 per cent) and Chinese (13.7 per cent).

But M. Kulasegaran (DAP-Teluk Intan) said this record (increased household income of Indians), although a substantial success, was meaningless.

To suggest that Indians in rural areas attained a higher level of success than urban Bumiputeras showed the Government's failure at eradicating poverty among Malays.

Chia Kwang Chye (BN-Bukit Bendera) said the information technology industry was still short of manpower.

"The Government must review the education curriculum to include IT and it must begin at the kindergarten level.

"At the same time, various steps have been taken to attract new investors in IT and this should be commended," he said.

Investment in the fairly new industry has increased by 8.4 per cent from 1994 to 1998.

Wan Mohd Jamin Wan Mahmood (Pas-Tumpat) said that a study should be done to evaluate the effects of the economic downturn on Bumiputera businessmen.

Mohd Khaled Nordin (BN-Johor Baru) said there was a serious delay in the translations of books into Jawi or Bahasa Malaysia.

Citing the United States, he said when an English book was published, a Spanish version would be available within a week.

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