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Daim-Property

DAIM CALLS FOR STREAMLINING OF LAWS ON LAND STATUS COVERSION

BANGI, May 3 (Bernama) -- Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin said today laws governing conversion of land status need to be studied and streamlined to avoid over-investment in the property sector.

He said much investments have gone into small sectors such as hotels, shoplots, office space and condominiums which did not serve the overall needs of the country.

"Thousands of millions of ringgit are tied down in these projects and this has caused the economy to slide," he said.

He said government officers at the grassroots level had not been strict to prevent the conversion of agricultural land to property development.

Laws on these matters need to be studied and streamlined, he said when tabling a working paper titled "District Officers' Role In Economic Recovery" at the District Officers' Conference 1999, here.

The two-day conference was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Daim said the country's property development sector's prospect was bleak due to over-investment in the last three years.

He said district officers also played a role in assisting in the physical development such as acquiring and developing land as only the Land Office has the information on certain land such the status of natural resources.

" Since Malaysia does not have a land utilisation map after all these years, the role of district officers was crucial in providing latest information in the development of a district or province," said Daim, who is also executive director of the National Economic Action Council (NEAC).

He also said district officers have the powers to mobilise the government machinery at district level to implement development projects speedily and ensure the target groups benefited from the projects.

He said the hardcore poor must benefit from the poverty eradication projects while squatters or those without own houses should be offered low-cost units.

Daim said district officers must be the "eyes and ears" of the government to check social ills such as drug addiction and be responsible in preserving the environment when carrying out a project.

He said they could also help the government in stimulating the economy by expediting implementation of projects besides informing the government on the problems faced.

In a question-and-answer session with district officers, Daim said the government had directed a study to be carried out to develop several thousands of hectares of land in Johor and Perak into commercial food production areas.

He said much more needed to be done to develop the country's food production sector as food imports were still high.

Meanwhile, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali, in his paper, said district officers must increase the use of information technology in their administration.

They must also take the initiative to introduce new approaches to speed up services and projects, he added.

-- BERNAMA

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