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Forest reserve approval becomes hot topic

THE admission made by Terengganu Government regarding the approval of 4,000 hectares of permanent forest reserve in Sungai Paka, Mukim Besol, Dungun to a company for oil palm cultivation became a hot topic in the House yesterday.

Datuk Mustafa Ali (Pas-Dungun), defending the Terengganu Government's move, said the award was given to a capable company which had a paid-up capital of RM1.3 million.

"After conducting a study, the Terengganu Government found that the company, set up last year, has a good track record.

"There is nothing wrong in awarding the project to the company as the Barisan Nasional had at one time even given such projects to companies with RM10 paid-up capital."

Mustafa said this after he was earlier challenged and bombarded with questions by the backbenchers, who raised the matter during the question and answer session.

"I thanked Berita Harian for carrying the story. Yes, the Terengganu Government has given the approval to the company to carry out the project for integrated farming.

"The 4,000 hectares will be cultivated with oil palm as suggested by the Primary Industries Ministry."

Mustafa, who is also the Terengganu Exco for Development, Economy, Petroleum, Industry and Human Resource, was bombarded with various questions by the backbenchers who were not satisfied with his clarification.

He also chided Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for making a sweeping statement when he (Dr Mahathir) criticised the Terengganu Government for approving the project.

"Dr Mahathir should not make such statements without looking at the facts first. If he knows the country's forest policy he will not say such things."

At this point, Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Noh Omar, Datuk Ruhanie Ahmad (BN-Parit Sulong), Datuk Bung Mokhtar Radin (BN-Kinabatangan) and Datuk Mohamad Zin (BN-Shah Alam) stood up to ask for clarification, but Mustafa was determined not to give them the way.

The backbenchers stood up again and again asking him to reveal the board of directors of the company, but Mustafa carried on with his speech. "It is only typical for some of the BN leaders to make baseless allegations."

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