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PM: Raise value of Malay reserve land by developing it with others

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SIMPANG PERTANG, Fri. - The value of Malay reserve land can be raised by development projects run by non-Malays, private companies and multinationals.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has suggested that Malay Reserve Land Enactments nationwide be amended accordingly, starting in Kuala Lumpur and Kedah.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said he would table a paper on the matter in Cabinet next week.

"I have chaired a few meetings on this with representatives from Kedah, the Federal Territory and related agencies. I will table a special paper on the matter to the Cabinet, together with Land and Co-operative Development Minister Tan Sri Kasitah Gaddam," he told reporters after giving away F-Class certificates to contractors and Tekun loans to entrepreneurs in Jelebu.

He added that the Government had agreed that several matters pertaining to Malay reserve land be pursued to shore up its value.

The Jelebu MP, who said a committee chaired by him had been set up, added that the amendments would pave the way for viable economic activities to be carried out on Malay reserve land.

"It is hoped that with the amendment, the economic value of Malay reserve land can be enhanced and transactions involving such land be expedited without much hassle."

The Government, Rais said, had agreed in principle that the leases on Malay reserve land should extend more than 50 years.

The question of Malay ownership of such land would not arise, he noted, as the land would remain in Malay hands.

"There is no question about this. This is more about questions on how to develop the land."

He said the status of Malay Reserve Land should be changed so that it could be developed by private companies.

The committee, he said, was entrusted with weeding out impediments which had so far hampered projects on Malay reserve land nationwide.

"This is the angle we are focusing on in Langkawi and the Federal Territory," he said.

However, any economic activities to be carried out on the land must first receive the endorsement of the respective State Governments.

Rais added that the Government would encourage the involvement of non-Malays and land owners in joint economic projects.

"Proposals on the amendment will be forwarded to the respective State Governments."

Rais expected that other State Governments would follow suit if the pilot proposed amendment in Kedah and Kuala Lumpur proved successful, and it was up to the discretion of all parties concerned to determine the economic activities to be carried out.

"What is more important are efforts to get rid of legal impediments that have hampered economic programmes on the land. I would visualise the parties concerned will be interested in setting up factories or corporate companies that can entail economic activities on Malay reserve land."