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PM: Malays must not sell their land

LANGKAWI, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today advised Malay land owners not to sell their land as it would hamper the Government's efforts to help Bumiputeras to develop their holdings including those in the Malay Reserve category.

"Please do not sell all your land because it will cause difficulties later (to develop Malay land)," Dr Mahathir said before breaking fast with local residents at the Kampung Yooi mosque here.

The Prime Minister, who was accompanied by Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, makes it a point to break fast at various mosques in Langkawi each year during the fasting month.

"Furthermore, Malay Reserve land owners are currently not allowed to rent their land; they cannot even lease it," said Dr Mahathir, who was here today to cap a half-day working visit to the island.

"But now we want to allow the land to be rented out while the land status remains as Malay Reserve."

Dr Mahathir was referring to a Cabinet decision on Wednesday agreeing in principle to amend the Malay Reserve Land Enactment under the National Land Code.

The amendment is to enable commercial development of idle and under-utilised land.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim was quoted as saying the proposed amendment would allow for joint development of 3.7 million hectares of Malay Reserve Land through smart partnerships of Malays and non-Malays.

Malay reserve land is currently governed by strict rules that vary in each State, which in many cases do not allow the land to be rented, leased or developed by non-Malays.

Dr Mahathir said the amendments would not jeopardise Malay interests, but was part of the Government's strategy to help Malay land owners earn extra income.

"This will allow us to earn some extra money, but please don't rent out all our land.

"We don't want a situation where there will not be any padi fields left because all our land has been rented."