

DPM: Groups out to stonewall Felda's progress
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By Nigel Aw

Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin today, in a veiled reference to PAS, said its groups have had a history of stonewalling Felda's progress and is now doing the same again.

christmas school 261211 muhyiddin "If we look back at history, when the then Alliance government wanted to introduce the Group Settlement Areas (GSA) Act 1960, certain groups said Felda was an attempt to cheat its participants," he told a crowd of over 5,000 at a Felda carnival in Kuala Lumpur this afternoon.

But the same group, Muhyiddin (right) added, had oddly opposed the move by Felda to stop the intake of new participants in 1990 after it proved successful in uplifting communities from poverty.

Likewise, Muhyiddin said, this time they are doing the same by opposing the government's plans to list Felda Global Ventures Holdings (FGVH), a subsidiary of Felda.

PAS-linked NGO Felda Settlers' Children Association (Anak) led by its chief Mazlan Aliman, has vehemently opposed the plan, claiming that it will shortchange Felda settlers.

Under the plan, FGVH which controls a 49 percent stake in Felda Holdings, the company which runs all of Felda's commercial businesses, will buy the remaining 51 percent stake in the company which is presently owned by settlers through the Felda Settlers Cooperative (KPF).

'Settlers ultimately shortchanged'

In exchange, the settlers through KPF, would become the largest shareholder in FGVH with a 37 percent stake and a one off windfall payment.

However, the settlers' voting rights and assets in FGVH would be regulated by the newly formed Felda Asset Holdings Company.

felda dataran merdeka muhyiddin 010412 Aside from this, Mazlan claims that FGVH has had a track record of making losses and settlers would ultimately be shortchanged.

However, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Ahmad Maslan has denied this, pointing out that FGVH had recorded a before tax profit of RM203 million in 2009 and RM366 million in 2010.

PAS has promised that it will reveal evidence to prove the contrary.

Muhyiddin also brushed aside initial claims that settlers would lose their lands under the plan, reiterating that it would only involve state land which the federal government had been permitted to develop under the Felda scheme.

"There are many parties that is trying to confuse Felda settlers with false facts, my advice to them is to stop it, the settlers are now matured and can evaluate the (Felda) struggle that has been going on for over 50 years," he said.

Pakatan Rakyat-led states have said that it will not surrender state lands to the federal government to implement the public listing plan.

Anak which has attempted to stall the plan in court managed to obtain an interim injunction to prevent any

transfer of KPF's shares in Felda Holdings to FGVH.

Following this, the government has said it will go ahead with plans to list FGVH on Bursa Malaysia even without KPF's participation.

Instead, a special purpose vehicle (SPV) will be created to ensure that settlers will "benefit" from the listing.

Goodies for Felda youths

Felda, set up by former Prime Minister Abdul Razak Hussein, is a government agency tasked with handling the resettlement of the rural poor into newly developed areas intended for the growing of cash crops.

To date, it involves 112,635 families, forming a population of almost two million and cultivating 860,000 hectares.

However, the growing population has proven a challenge particularly for the livelihood of the new Felda generation, as the land acreage remains constant.

The carnival today appeared to target this generation, as Muhyiddin announced RM7.53 million worth of funding for Felda youth programmes and associations.

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