



**Negeri Sembilan settlers bring woes to Penang**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**September 25, 2010**

Settlers of an abandoned land scheme in Bahau, Negeri Sembilan that has left them RM16 million in debt have turned to Penang to help find a solution to their over 30-year problem.



The settlers, former NUPW (National Union of Plantation Workers) members and estate workers, are seeking the help of Deputy Chief Minister II P Ramasamy (*left in photo*) to appeal to the Negeri Sembilan government to absorb the exorbitant debt that they owe national asset management company Danaharta Nasional Bhd.

The families are also urging the Negeri government to hand over their 4,000-acre land to Felcra or Felcra to manage, so that they can begin to pay back their debts that were incurred earlier on loans to build their houses on the scheme property.

The settlers have resorted to approaching Batu Kawan parliamentarian Ramasamy, as he had taken up their issues while he was an academic with the now defunct Institute of Social Analysis (Insan) in the 1970s.

They also claim that the media in Negeri Sembilan has totally ignored their plight

Spokesperson for the settlers K Krishnan said they were prepared to settle their debts by paying a state agency that would manage and cultivate the land that was promised to them under the abandoned land scheme.

'Where is 1Malaysia?'

Before they were brought in to settle on the land under the scheme, each settler was promised an eight-acre plot for crop cultivation, that they have yet to receive, and a one-acre piece of land for housing.

They later found the one-acre land, together with their house, mortgaged to a finance company.

The settlers have unwittingly found themselves in debt to this finance company to the tune of RM50,000 to RM60,000 each, and many are unable to settle the amount.

"But we can definitely work out something. If Felcra or Felcra can take over the land, we can pay them back. We are prepared to settle our debts," said Krishnan (*right*) at a press conference in Komtar, Penang today.

Another settler, V Munusamy, was more direct in his criticisms of the BN government,

saying that it should not look at the problem from a racial perspective.

"This is 1Malaysia. The government can surely help us if it wants to; just hand over the land to Felda or Felcra, and we will pay them back," he added.

About 420 settlers and their families from Kampung Serampang Indah (Gatco village) at Bandar Baru, Serting Hilir, Bahau have been suffering this plight for over three decades.

Out of this number, 280 are Indian, 120 are Malay and 30 are Chinese.

'Political solution needed'

Ramasamy, who is DAP's international secretary, said the matter could only be resolved with a political solution as the workers have been left in a lurch.

He said Felda or Felcra, if it is tasked to manage and cultivate the land, can give shares equivalent of 8 acres each to the settlers.



With the state government's backing, investors can also be invited to develop the land, he added.

He urged the BN-led government in Negeri Sembilan to put aside its racial attitude and tackle the matter immediately.

"I know BN sees this from a racial perspective, but I urge them to please look into the plight of the settlers and find a solution," he said.

"They have waited too long for justice. Some (of the victims) have (since passed away), some have moved out, and the others who remain are in a limbo as to what will happen to them in the future," he said.

The families were settled in the failed land scheme comprising more than 4,000 acres that was granted on leasehold by the Negeri Sembilan government to the NUPW in the 1970s for the purpose of settling estate workers.

The scheme however collapsed in the late 1970s for various reasons, and subsequent events have conspired to leave the families in limbo.

Malaysiakini in 2001 reported that the settlers had sought the help of Rais Yatim, who had pledged he would personally look into the matter if he was reelected as MP. Their problems, however, remain unresolved till today.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.  
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/143615>