

**Suhakam caution: Help the settlers before next polls**  
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Suhakam wants the Perak state government to acknowledge the rights of people who have cultivated and made productive abandoned former mining land in Tanjung Tualang, Perak.

Its commissioner Muhammad Sha'ani Abdullah told *Malaysiakini* yesterday that the 42 farmers and livestock owners have made the 80ha former mining land area productive.

He said: "The state government must follow fair process and acknowledge the rights of these settlers who have toiled the abandoned mining land to make it economically viable.

"The laws of the land should work for the benefit of the people, who have contributed to the state."

He then sounded a note of caution, pointing out that there are other avenues for them to vent their anger and frustrations like, for instance, the next general election expected in the near future.

On Wednesday, the 42 settlers with the support of Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) had bussed to Suhakam's office in Kuala Lumpur to voice their concern over the authorities' reluctance to give the Temporary Occupation Licences (TOL).

Meeting with district land officer

As a result, Sha'ani paid a visit yesterday to the Tanjung Tualang area and later in the evening on the suggestion of the state government had a 45 minute-meeting with the Kampar district land officer.

According to Sha'ani, the officer had promised to submit their report to the state government for a final decision.

The settlers comprise 37 farmers - most former fishermen and contract workers from Sitiawan - with the rest comprising cattle rearers.

Their farming took off in the 1980s with verbal approval from the mine's operators.

Although they claimed they had received approval from the departments of agriculture, fisheries, environment and lands and mines, the Kampar land office had rejected their applications for TOL.

According to PSM national deputy chief M Saraswathy, both the BN and the former Pakatan state governments started playing the blame game, accusing each other of giving the land to a Perak bigwig, leaving the future of these people hanging in the balance.