

Felda settlers win RM11mil award in civil case
Malaysianmirror.com
26 August 2010

PUTRAJAYA – More than 300 Felda settlers will receive a RM11 million award after the Federal Court unanimously rejected a review application by the land authority and its subsidiary.

The 354 settlers won the award in a civil case over alleged manipulation of palm oil grading by Felda and its subsidiary, Felda Palm Industries Sdn Bhd.

The apex court ruled on Thursday that it had no jurisdiction to entertain the application.

It was decided by a three-man panel chaired by Court of Appeal Justice Alauddin Mohd Sherif with Federal Court judges Justice Hashim Yusoff and Justice Md Raus Sharif, The Star reported.

Earlier this year, Felda had obtained a stay of the Federal Court's decision ordering it to pay RM11mil in damages to the settlers pending the disposal of its application for a review of the decision.

It had been ordered to pay the settlers damages in relation to payments for oil palm fruits, the quality of which the settlers alleged the agency had understated, from 1996 to 2002, causing them to suffer losses.

The Kota Baru High Court had awarded them RM7.8mil plus interest after the agency's lawyer did not turn up for the hearing of the suit. The decision was upheld by the Court of Appeal.

The settlers, who have been fighting for compensation for more than 10 years, are expected to receive bettuanibrahim_pasween RM25,000 and RM30,000 each.

"Today's victory proves that PAS and PR have been sincere in fighting for the welfare of the settlers who have been victimised for years by an unjust system," PAS vice president Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man (right) told Harakahdaily Thursday.

Congratulating the settlers, Tuan Ibrahim said their patience "has finally paid off today".

Tuan Ibrahim said the court ruling Thursday has vindicated Felda settlers who had accused the agency of wrongdoing.

"With today's decision, it means that the allegations brought forward by ANAK have basis...it will open the eyes of the parties involved to pay settlers fairly," he said, referring to recent police reports lodged by National Felda Settlers' Children's Association (ANAK) detailing massive irregularities in Felda.

Tuan Ibrahim also hit out at Felda chairman Yussof Noor for alleging that opposition leaders were trying to pit the settlers against the agency, saying Pakatan Rakyat was only trying to get justice for the settlers.

"The issue of splitting Felda does not arise because some of the supporters and members of PR are settlers and the second generation of Felda.

"They only seek justice and the government should not provide 'sweeteners' to them in time of Raya while at the same time rob them by manipulating oil palm price," he said.

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