

Kedah MB Clarifies UUM Quit Rent Issue
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ALOR SETAR -- Kedah Menteri Besar Azizan Abdul Razak today dismissed reports that the state government had raised the quit rent of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) by 10 times to RM1.7 million.

He said statements on the matter made by Jerlun MP Mukhriz Tun Dr Mahathir and UUM Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Mohamed Mustafa Ishak were inaccurate.

"What I want to stress here is that since 2008, the Kedah government has never issued any directive or made any decision to raise the quit rent. In fact, in 2008, we reduced quit rent by between 35 and 75 per cent, including for land owned by the federal government.

"Due to the reduction, the state government suffered an annual loss of revenue of RM50 million. As such, their statements are totally inappropriate," he told a news conference at Wisma Darulaman, here.

Azizan said that in 2006, when Barisan Nasional was administrating Kedah, UUM asked for a reduction in the quit rent and was given a rebate, with the rate at RM100,000 for two years.

"We (the PAS-led state government) suffered losses of RM1.6 million annually from 2008," he said, adding that after the end of the rebate period, UUM had to pay quit rent at the original rate of RM1.7 million per year.

"This is where the misunderstanding came about. They could not differentiate between a rebate and a rise in quit rent. After the period of rebate has ended, they must pay as usual.

"We did not raise the quit rent, but reverted to the original rate. This has happened to others who asked for the rebate, not only government agencies but individuals as well.

Azizan said UUM had been offered the option to pay its quit rent in instalments.

He also said that UUM had written seeking a rebate once more and the letter was sent to the Land and Mines Department, but the application was rejected because they had been given a rebate earlier.

"They can appeal, but it is not necessarily so that their application will be approved," he said.

On a shortage of piped water supply at UUM, the menteri besar advised the university to upgrade the water tank and pipes in the campus as the state government had installed mains which could accommodate the need up to Bukit Kayu Hitam.

"Syarikat Air Darul Aman (Sada) channels 15 million litres of water daily to UUM while it only provides five million litres and 10 million litres to other areas," he said.

(Bernama)

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