

# 'GOVT WILL RECLAIM LAND IF IT IS OWNED BY JOHOR SULTAN'

**Govt is rightful owner of Bukit Chagar land slated for RTS project, says Dr M**

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**T**HE government is determined to claim back federal land in Bukit Chagar, Johor Baru, if the ownership had been transferred to Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the federal government was the rightful owner of the land surrounding the Sultan Iskandar Customs, Immigration and Quarantine Complex (CIQ).

He said this in response to reports that a 4.5ha plot of land in Bukit Chagar, which was initially earmarked for the Rapid Transit System (RTS) train link, was registered under the Johor ruler's name.

The controversy has implicated newly-appointed Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Sahrudin Jamal, whom Dr Mahathir had met earlier along with his executive council members during a 75-minute closed-door session.

Though the topic of the meeting was not made known, it is believed to have been over the RTS land issue.

Dr Mahathir said the government did not have enough information on the matter, adding that Sultan Ibrahim's ownership of the plot remained a rumour.

"Yes. It is our land. We will claim back the land.

"Those who have taken the land must go through processes.

"To date, based on what we know... we have not received a full report.

"We have heard only rumours from the press that the sultan of Johor has taken over the land," he said after chairing a Pakatan Harapan presidential council meeting at the Al-Bukhary Foundation here.

Dr Mahathir said if it was true that the federal land in Bukit Chagar had changed hands, the next move would be to find out if payment was made by the party who purchased the land.

"If he (Sultan Ibrahim) paid for the land, then we have to buy back.

"If he hasn't paid, we don't buy back. It is our land... we acquired it.

"It is part of the land that was acquired for the construction of buildings

He said he did not believe that there was any attempt by Sultan Ibrahim to wrongfully acquire the federal land.

He said the issue could be resolved if the federal government clarified its ownership.

He denied there was any tension between the federal government and the Johor palace due to the issue.

"There's no tension. What tension? I don't think Tuanku wants to confiscate federal land. We must make another claim. That land is actually ours (federal government)."

On the need for the RTS project, he said the government was considering whether it needed to continue with it as it would not resolve the massive congestion that occurred daily at the busy border crossing.

"We have agreed to take six months to analyse whether we want to continue or to make other proposals.

"It won't solve the congestion problem because the train cannot carry all passengers to and from Singapore.

"It cannot carry motorcycles and the train is limited in terms of its capacity."

*The New Straits Times* has learnt that the Johor Land and Mines Department discovered an

anomaly in the ownership of a plot of land near the CIQ on Jan 28 this year.

A source said the department was notified that the title for the 4.5ha lot was transferred to Sultan Ibrahim.

The lot was one of five in Bukit Chagar which the federal government received from the Johor government in 2012 as part of a land swap deal.

It was learnt that a notice on a RM70,685 payment was received on July 25, 2012.

However, to date, the registration status of the land title has yet to be issued by the state government.

It is unclear when or how Sultan Ibrahim acquired the land but it was learnt that ownership transfer was done under the previous Barisan Nasional administration sometime in 2017 or last year.

Sahrudin declined to speak to the media and instead entered his car when asked to comment on the status of the land for the RTS project.