

'BN will solve Orang Asli land issue'

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ENCROACHMENT ON ANCESTRAL LAND: Kelantan Pas govt ignoring plight of community, says minister

KUALA LUMPUR : LAND problems faced by the Orang Asli in Kelantan will be resolved if Barisan Nasional (BN) comes to power in the state.

Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal said yesterday the plight of the Orang Asli in the state would no longer be ignored, as in the current case under the Pas administration.

"If BN captures Kelantan, we will resolve land issues faced by the Orang Asli," Shafie said after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (Risda) and South Kelantan Development Authority (Kesedar) here.

The Orang Asli community in the Pas-led state have for long protested against encroachment on their ancestral land for logging and opening of plantations.

Shafie, however, did not specify how the problems will be resolved and the time frame needed to do it.

"Let the date of the next general election be announced first, then we will take steps to capture the state and help its people."

Shafie said the Orang Asli were no longer the "forgotten lot", with some of them having moved on to pursue higher education, including even going abroad.

The MoU signed yesterday will enable the replanting of rubber and oil palm and the new cultivation of rubber plants, worth RM41 million.

Shafie said even though the market prices of rubber and oil palm were stable, it was difficult to predict the amount of return from the project as it still depended on fluctuations in the world market.

He said a Rural Transformation Centre (RCT) would be opened in Kelantan early next month, to enable smallholders to market their products via various channels.

Present at the event yesterday were Risda chairman Tan Sri Rahim Tamby Chik and Kesedar chairman Datuk Ramzi Ab Rahman.

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