

## **PKR: Sarawak CM committed to resolving land code issue**

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**By Richard T.W.**

### **Opposition leaders paying Abang Johari a courtesy call leave with the assurance that the deputy chief minister is looking into the matter.**

KUCHING: Sarawak Chief Minister Abang Johari Openg has given his assurance that the state government will resolve the issues pertaining to the land code on native customary rights.

Sarawak PKR leader Baru Bian said the opposition component was assured of this when its leaders paid the chief minister a courtesy call on Friday.

Deputy Chief Minister Douglas Uggah Embas and Second Resource Planning Minister Awang Tengah Ali Hassan were among those who received the visitors at Wisma Bapa Malaysia here.

Following a Federal Court decision on Dec 20 last year, Dayak landowners may not apply their native customary rights (NCRs) to claim virgin forest land as territorial domains (pemakai menoa) and communal forest reserves (pulau galau).

The Federal Court ruled that adat, or customary law, had force of law over “temuda” (cultivated land) but not NCR lands.

“We had occasion to meet the late chief minister Adenan Satem and we conveyed to him the need to amend the Sarawak Land Code in view of the fact that NCRs in Sarawak is an explosive and sensitive issue that has gone all the way to the Federal Court,” Baru told reporters at the state’s party headquarters here today.

Baru said Abang Johari had given similar assurances of resolution during the meeting.

“We are glad to hear from Abang Johari that this has been taken up. In fact, Deputy Chief Minister Amar Douglas Uggah has been tasked to look into the matter,” said Baru.

Baru said the CM had also promised that the state would look into the cases of Sarawakians who had converted to Islam but wished to revert to their former religion following a divorce or break-up with the family.

“Many Sarawakians who are no longer practising Muslims and who wish to declare that they have returned to their old faith or are no longer Muslim are in a dilemma.”

Baru said such Sarawakians were in limbo as neither the shariah court nor the High Court admitted to having the jurisdiction to declare them non-Muslims.

“The response (from Abang Johari) was very positive. They are now reviewing the state shariah ordinance. We hope to resolve the problems that are not covered by the present ordinance.”

The CM also said that the state would pick up where Adenan left off in the struggle to reclaim Sarawakian rights under the Malaysia Agreement 1963, said Baru

“We are happy to hear that from him. He has said so in the papers, but we would like to personally tell him that we are happy to support him in that area.”

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