

S'wak does away with quit rent

Star 16/3/2016 Pg. 15

State is first to make this move and all arrears and surcharges waived, says Adenan

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KUCHING: Sarawak has abolished quit rent on two categories of land with immediate effect as part of efforts to help the poor.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem said the remission applied to smallholder agricultural land of less than 100 acres (46.5ha) and residential land.

"With effect from March 15, land rent shall no longer be charged on these lands.

"All arrears and surcharges, if any, are hereby waived," he told a

press conference yesterday.

Adenan said the decision would benefit 360,422 titles with land rent amounting to RM8.58mil, or 19% of total land rent.

Of these, 173,752 are titles for smallholder agricultural land with land rent amounting to RM3.62mil or 8% of all land rent, while residential land accounts for 186,670 titles with land rent totalling RM4.96mil.

"We will refund those who have paid the land rent in advance," he said, adding that Sarawak was the first and only state to make this move.

Adenan said the state Cabinet

would discuss matters relating to the assessment rates for residential, commercial and industrial properties.

They will also discuss whether July 22 can be made a public holiday in Sarawak to commemorate the date the state attained self-rule from the British.

"I will make the announcements later on these two matters," he said.

During an interview with TV1 on Feb 26, Adenan had said quit rent would be abolished to assist the poor, especially those in rural areas.

He had also said the state government would look into how to reduce

assessment rates.

On a separate matter, Adenan apologised if his remarks telling the Prime Minister to get an Iban wife had caused offence to anyone.

"It was said as a joke and in a light-hearted manner. Even the Prime Minister himself was laughing. He knew it was meant as a joke."

"But if some people are offended by it, I am sorry," he said.

At the launch of the *Inclusive Malaysia, A Digital Nation* programme here last Saturday, Adenan had jokingly said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak should get an Iban wife

to help him with the language in view of his frequent visits to the state.

Some Dayak non-governmental organisations had called for the Chief Minister to apologise for the joke, saying it was rather inappropriate.

Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia, which earlier urged Adenan to say sorry to Iban women, welcomed the apology.

"We hope that our leaders learn from this mistake and be more respectful towards women and the Orang Asal in their public statements," it said in a Facebook post.