



(From left): Martin, Ramy and Paul.

‘NT land should be allowed to retain status after being developed’

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KOTA KINABALU: Why can't Native Title (NT) land be allowed to retain its status even after being developed for commercial purposes?

This was among the posers raised at the Symposium on Sabah Native Land Rights held at UMS, Tuesday.

“Why shouldn't natives be allowed to develop their NT land since many of them are financially capable, thus there should not be a need to change NT status to a CL status,” said Martin Idang of Pusat Sumber Adat dan Mediasi Kaum Anak Negeri Sabah (Pusaka).

“The NT status would mean that there is no time limit and there is not much premium to be paid,” he said, adding that the only problem is whether other natives are willing to buy the buildings developed.

He said the (Sabah Land) Ordinance now is 80 years old, and it is high time that a review and amendments are made accordingly.

“Therefore, I suggest that we use the NT land to be developed for commercial purposes, but then we need to see the land law,” he said.

On the 400,000 hectares available in the State, he said: “If I'm not mistaken, it is said

that the Head of State may proclaim the land for the development of natives or other communities.

“Perhaps we can get this gazetted to avoid the land being applied for by other people,” he said.

Apart from that, Idang also agreed with suggestions made by Senator Datuk Maijol Mahap that there should be a list of communities in Sabah.

“At present, there is no list in Sabah, unlike in Sarawak where they have a list of 33 races.

“The government needs to seriously look into this and make a list to serve as a schedule in the Federal and State constitution as well as make an amendment/review on the native ordinance interpretation to include this in,” he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Paul Porodong from the School of Social Science in UMS suggested that village chiefs be selected from within the village and not from outside.

“They are now given allowances, salaries and remuneration, thus we expect them to be more professional in their role as the village chief,” said Paul, adding that there is room for improvement so that they truly represent the community.