

S.T. 30 DEC 1972

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — An attempt is to be made by the Food Industries of Malaysia Sdn. Bhd. to establish cashew nut plantations in the East Coast States.

Fima's new chairman, Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamed, who will take over the post on Monday, said today that applications had been made to clear the ground.

He said planting of the crop would start in November on 1,000 acres in Trengganu and another 1,000 areas in Pahang.

200 at first

The trees would mature in three-and-a-half years and would become more productive as they grow older.

"As you can see, this is a long-term project," he said.

Initially, 200 people would be employed to look after the trees and the land.

Once the plantations were in production, more workers would be recruited for harvesting, shelling and other tasks.

At present, the production of cashew nuts in the country was negligible. Most of the nuts packed locally were imported from India.

The planting of cashew nut trees on unproductive land in Trengganu and Pahang would be a boost to the two States, especially the rural population.

Dr. Mahathir said not much of the cashew nut would go to waste as its

shell could be utilised for industrial use.

He said Fima was also looking into the possibility of large-scale planting of rambutans.

Another project, which he described as his pet scheme, was the backyard planting of chillies to bring in more income for the small man.

The country was at present importing about five million dollars worth of dried chillies annually.

Dr. Mahathir said Fima might also venture into the production of banana and sweet potato chips.