

KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 9 (BERNAMA) — A SENATOR TODAY URGED THE FARMERS' ORGANISATION AUTHORITY TO MAKE BULK PURCHASES OF MACHINERY AND FERTILISERS FOR DISTRIBUTION TO FARMERS SO THAT FARMING EXPENDITURE CAN BE REDUCED RESULTING IN BETTER PROFITS.

SENATOR (DR.) MAHATHIR MOHAMED SAID THAT ONE OF THE MAJOR PROBLEMS BEING FACED BY FARMERS WAS THE HIGH COST OF FARMING WHICH REDUCED THE MARGIN OF THEIR PROFITS.

HE WAS SPEAKING DURING THE DEBATE ON THE FARMERS' ORGANISATION BILL INTRODUCED BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT, TENGKU AHMAD RITHAUDEEN.

THE BILL SEEKS TO INTEGRATE AGRO-BASED CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES, FARMERS' ASSOCIATIONS AND OTHER BODIES CONNECTED WITH THE PROMOTION OF AGRICULTURE TO IMPROVE THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STANDARDS OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY.

SENATOR MAHATHIR ALSO SUGGESTED THAT FARMERS BE ALLOWED TO TAKE PART IN THE PROCESSING OF THEIR CROPS SO THAT THE PROFITS OBTAINED COULD BE PLOUGHED BACK TO THEIR ASSOCIATION FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE FARMERS THEMSELVES. -- BERNAMA MORE 1747/A1

SENATE-MAHATHIR 2 KUALA LUMPUR

REFERRING TO PADI FARMERS, THE SENATOR SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE GUARANTEED MINIMUM PRICE FOR PADI WAS \$16 A PICUL, SEVERAL FARMERS WERE ACTUALLY GETTING MUCH LESS BECAUSE OF PAYMENTS AND DEDUCTIONS FOR FARMING EXPENSES.

IN ADDITION THEY HAD TO PAY TO MIDDLEMEN.

SENATOR MAHATHIR SUGGESTED THAT THE AUTHORITY WHICH WOULD HAVE 16 DRYING COMPLEXES SHOULD OFFER SHARES TO FARMERS SO THAT THE PROFITS COULD BE RETURNED TO THE FARMERS.

HE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO LOOK INTO THE PROPER STAFFING OF DEDICATED AND QUALIFIED OFFICERS IN FARMERS' ORGANISATIONS.

CAREFUL SELECTION SHOULD BE MADE SO THAT ONLY OFFICERS WHO HAD THE FARMERS' INTERESTS AT HEART WOULD BE RECRUITED TO SERVE IN THE ASSOCIATIONS. -- BERNAMA MORE 11816/A1

SENATE - MAHATHIR 3 KUALA LUMPUR

SENATOR AMALUDDIN DARUS IN SUPPORTING THE BILL AGREED THAT QUALIFIED AND TRAINED OFFICERS SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO THE AUTHORITY. THE STEP BY THE GOVERNMENT TO FORM THE AUTHORITY SHOWED THE GRAVE CONCERN IT HAD REGARDING THE LOT OF FARMERS.

SENATOR HAJI OTHMAN ABDULLAH WANTED THE AUTHORITY TO IMPROVE FACILITIES FOR FARMERS AS THIS WOULD HELP MAKE YOUTHS REALISE IT WAS MORE PROFITABLE TO WORK ON THE LAND THAN IN TOWNS WITH LOW PAY.

FOUR ASPECTS OF AGRICULTURAL FACILITIES WHICH NEEDED FURTHER IMPROVEMENT IN THE INTERESTS OF FARMERS WERE DELINEATED BY SENATOR KAMARUL ARIFFIN.

THEY WERE CREDIT FACILITIES, NEW FARMING TECHNIQUES, MARKETING FACILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION OF FARMERS' ORGANISATIONS.

SENATOR SHAARI JUSOH HOPED THE INTEGRATION OF FARMERS ASSOCIATIONS AND CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES WOULD BRING FARMERS TO FURTHER PROGRESS. -- BERNAMA MORE 1905/A1

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SENATE-MAHATHIR 4 KUALA LUMPUR

SENATOR WONG BENG CHOW HOPED THE GOVERNMENT WOULD OPEN UP MORE LAND SCHEMES FOR PARTICIPATION BY ALL IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS.

HE ALLEGED THERE WAS SHORTAGE OF FARMING LAND IN SOME PLACES AND THAT SOME FARMERS HAD UNECONOMIC PLOTS.

THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD INCREASE ITS ALLOCATION TO THE FARMERS ORGANISATION AUTHORITY SO THAT ALL ITS OBJECTIVES COULD BE IMPLEMENTED, SENATOR HAJI HASSAN YAAKUB SAID.

AGREEING, SENATOR HAJI ABDUL RAHIM MANAN, ALSO FEEL THE PRESENT ALLOCATION OF \$4 MILLION WAS INSUFFICIENT. -- BERNAMA MORE 1935/A1

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SENATOR HAJI ALI HAJI ISMAIL URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO STUDY THE WEAKNESSES IN THE OLD SYSTEM OF FARMERS' CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES AND FARMERS' ASSOCIATIONS SO THAT THE BILL WHEN PASSED WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED SMOOTHLY.

HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN INSTANCES OF FARMERS SPLITTING INTO SEVERAL FACTIONS DUE TO CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE ASSOCIATIONS AND SOCIETIES.

SENATOR ISMAIL SHEIKH IBRAHIM URGED THE FARMERS' ORGANISATION AUTHORITY TO BE CAREFUL WHEN ISSUING LOANS TO ENSURE THAT THEY WERE REPAYED.

HE SUGGESTED THAT SCHOOL LEAVERS OR SPM HOLDERS BE RECRUITED BY THE AUTHORITY TO OVERCOME ANY STAFF SHORTAGE.

SENATOR ISMAIL SAID THAT GOODS PROVIDED BY THE ORGANISATION SHOULD NOT BE DEARER THAN THOSE AVAILABLE AT THE SHOPS.

IN THE PAST, SOME FARMERS HAD REFUSED TO JOIN ASSOCIATIONS BECAUSE FACILITIES AND GOODS PROVIDED BY THEM WERE MORE COSTLY THAN THOSE AVAILABLE ELSEWHERE, HE ADDED. -- BERNAMA MORE 2045/A1

SENATE-MAHATHIR 6 KUALA LUMPUR

SENATOR ZAINUDDIN HAJI MOHAMED SIDIN URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO LOOK INTO THE PLIGHT OF THE LANDLESS FARMERS WHO HAD TO RENT LAND TO FARM +AT QUITE A PRICE+.

THE SENATOR SAID THAT SUCH FARMERS EVENTUALLY EARNED VERY LITTLE PROFITS AFTER ALL DEDUCTIONS.

SENATOR YEAP KHENG YAM DREW THE ATTENTION OF THE GOVERNMENT TO THE PROBLEM OF VEGETABLE AND FRUIT GROWERS IN PERAK WHO FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN LAND TO FARM.

AS SUCH, HE ADDED, MANY OF THEM HAD TO SQUAT ILLEGALLY ON STATE LAND TO PLANT THEIR VEGETABLES AND GROW THEIR FRUIT TREES.

SENATOR YEAP APPEALED TO THE GOVERNMENT TO EXPEDITE ARRANGEMENTS TO GIVE LAND GRANTS TO SEVERAL POMELO GROWERS IN TAMBUN, PERAK.

WINDING UP THE THREE-HOUR DEBATE ON THE BILL, TENGKU RITHAUDDEEN ASSURED THE HOUSE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD DO ITS BEST TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE FARMERS.

HOWEVER, HE ADDED FARMERS THEMSELVES MUST CO-OPERATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT SO THAT PROJECTS COULD BE IMPLEMENTED SUCCESSFULLY AND THE AIMS OF THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY COULD BE REALISED. -- BERNAMA MORE 2011/YF

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SENATE-MAHATHIR 7 KUALA LUMPUR

HE SAID THE SETTING UP OF THE FARMERS' ORGANISATION WOULD UNITE THE AGRO-BASED CO-OPERATIVES AND FARMERS ASSOCIATIONS.

IN THIS WAY, THE DIFFICULTIES AND CONFLICTS ENCOUNTERED IN THE PAST WOULD BE OVERCOME.

HE SAID UNDER THE BILL, THERE WERE PROVISIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES WHICH WOULD CHANNEL LOANS TO FARMERS IN A CO-ORDINATED MANNER.

HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD LOOKED INTO ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE FARMERS AND HE HOPED THAT THE ORGANISATION WOULD SERVE TO RESOLVE THEM AS BEST AS POSSIBLE.

TENGGU RITHAUDEEN SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS AWARE OF THE SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED AND TRAINED OFFICERS NOT ONLY IN FARMERS' BODIES BUT ALSO IN OTHER FIELDS.

HE URGED THE PEOPLE TO BE PATIENT AS THE GOVERNMENT WAS DOING ITS LEVEL BEST TO TRAIN AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE TO FILL THE VACANT POSTS.

THE BILL WAS PASSED. -- BERNAMA 2013/YF