

# Mahathir: We don't chase away migrants

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**TAWAU, Thurs.** — The Government accepts people who migrate to Malaysia with the hope that they will assimilate themselves with the local residents, Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Speaking to residents of Semporna near here, including some Filipino refugees, he expressed the hope that with their assimilation, the migrants would be a positive contribution to the development of the country.

He said the Government did not prevent people from settling here, nor were migrants chased away.

"We accept those who have to leave their homeland due to certain problems and want to settle in this country," he added.

He said migration of people within this archipelago was not unusual. It had been going on even before the colonial days.

There had even been people from Sumatra, Java and Sulawesi who had migrated to the Peninsula and made it their home, just as there were people in Sabah who had migrated from the Philippines and Indonesia to look for jobs.

He expressed the hope that the migrants would in time assimilate themselves to become citizens of the country so that

**By REJAL ARBEE**

their presence in the community would not give rise to any problems.

There are more than 30,000 refugees in the Semporna area.

Dr. Mahathir and Dr. Siti Hasmah, on their second day of their visit to Sabah, had a very tight programme today.

Dr. Mahathir made the speech at the residence of Datuk Panglima Abdullah at the Wisma Sri Semporna.

## Oyster farm

He arrived in an RMAF Nuri helicopter from Kota Kinabalu this morning and visited Pulau Buhai Dulang, about 10 miles offshore, to look at the pearl culture in the State.

Dr. Mahathir, who was accompanied by the Chief Minister Datuk Harris Salleh and Datin Rupiah, was briefed on the oyster culture being undertaken by Kaya Pearl Sdn. Bhd., a joint-venture company with a Japanese concern.

Dr. Mahathir was told of the difficulty in getting oysters for the culture due to a lack of divers.

He was told that it took about three years to fully culture a pearl.

He also visited the cocoa research centre at Bukit Quion, about 24 mi-

les from here, where research is being undertaken to produce better cocoa hybrids with higher yields.

The station, opened in 1957, provided four million cocoa seeds to Peninsular Malaysia and 4.6 million seeds to Sabah last year.

Dr. Mahathir later planted the latest high-yielding cocoa tree at the station.

From Bukit Quion, he went to the Sabah Softwood reforestation project at Brumas, 45 miles from here.

The project is being undertaken by Sabah Softwood Sdn. Bhd., a joint venture between the Sabah Foundation and North Borneo Timbers Bhd.

Sabah Softwood manager M. W. McMyn said that 150,000 acres would be replanted with fast-growing and commercially-viable softwood by 1987.

He said the areas were being planted with exotic trees with a harvesting cycle of only seven to 12 years, against a natural regeneration cycle of at least 40 years.

Tonight, Dr. Mahathir attended a reception hosted by the local community at the community centre here.

Tomorrow, he will visit the Sekolah Islamiah here before leaving for Sandakan.