

ND08:  
MAHATHIR

ALOR STAR, DEC. 15<sup>80</sup> (BERNAMA) <sup>(P)</sup> — THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO GIVE SERIOUS ATTENTION TO THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND TO THE FARMERS IN PARTICULAR.

THIS ASSURANCE CAME FROM ACTING PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD WHEN HE LAUNCHED FARMERS DAY HERE TODAY.

HE SAID FARMERS WERE PROVIDING INVALUABLE SERVICES TO THE COUNTRY BY ENSURING THAT FOOD WAS AVAILABLE.

WITHOUT AGRICULTURE, THE COUNTRY WOULD SURELY LACK FOOD AND WOULD HAVE TO BE FORCED TO IMPORT THEM FROM ABROAD, HE ADDED.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THAT IN KEDAH, MILLIONS OF DOLLARS HAD BEEN SPENT NOT ONLY TO INCREASE PRODUCTION BUT ALSO TO HELP THE FARMERS.

THE PADI PRICE WHICH WAS ONLY \$16 PER PICUL 12 YEARS AGO HAD NOW INCREASED TO \$40 PER PICUL, UP 500 PER CENT. — BERNAMA MORE 1258/ZCM

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HE SAID EVEN THOUGH THE PLANTING AND OTHER COSTS HAD GONE UP, THEY WERE STILL SMALL WHEN COMPARED TO THE INCOME WHICH HAD INCREASED VERY SUBSTANTIALLY.

+IT IS TRUE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE FARMERS BUT THEY WOULD TRULY BENEFIT ONLY THROUGH THEIR VERY OWN EFFORTS, + DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID.

HE SAID IT WAS USELESS IF THE PADI PRICE WAS \$40 PER PICUL IF THE FARMERS DID NOT PLANT THE PADI AND DID NOT UTILISE THE MUDA IRRIGATION FACILITIES FOR DOUBLE-CROPPING.

+IT WILL BE USELESS TOO IF THE FERTILISER AID GIVEN IS USED TO OBTAIN CASH FOR OTHER EXPENDITURE, + HE ADDED. — BERNAMA MORE 131 ZCM

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DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID MUCH VILLAGE LAND HAD NOT BEEN EFFECTIVELY EXPLOITED.

HE SUGGESTED THAT MORE CROPS BE CULTIVATED AND LIVESTOCK BE REARED ON SUCH LAND. INCOMES COULD ALSO INCREASE FOR FARMERS IF THEY WORKED COLLECTIVELY ON THE LAND IN A SYSTEMATIC MANNER.

THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THERE WAS NO RELIGIOUS RESTRICTION OR CULTURAL BASIS AGAINST A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TO EARN PROFIT FROM HARD WORK.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THERE WOULD BE SOME PEOPLE WHO WOULD SAY THAT IT WAS NOT NECESSARY TO CHASE AFTER MATERIALISTIC THINGS.

HOWEVER, THESE WERE THE SAME PEOPLE WHO DEMONSTRATED OVER ISSUES RELATED TO THE PADI PRICE, HE SAID.

THEY WERE THEREFORE PLAYING POLITICS FOR THEIR OWN SELF-INTERESTS AND NOTHING ELSE, HE ADDED. — BERNAMA MORE 1345/£

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THE GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, WAS PREPARED TO HELP THE PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE FARMERS, PROVIDED THEY CHANGED THEIR ATTITUDES AND WORKED HARD.

HE ADDED THAT FARMERS' DAY WOULD HELP TO REMIND THE PEOPLE OF THE IMPORTANT ROLE PLAYED BY FARMERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY.

ALSO PRESENT WERE THE MENTRI BESAR DATUK SERI SYED NAHAR SHAHABUDDIN, PERLIS MENTRI BESAR DATUK JAAFAR HASSAN, LAND AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER DATUK SHARIFF AHMAD, AGRICULTURE MINISTER DATUK ABDUL MANAN OTHMAN AND INDONESIAN AGRICULTURE MINISTER PROF. SOEDARSONO HADISAPOETRO.

MORE THAN 3,000 FARMERS FROM THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY ATTENDED THE GATHERING WHICH WAS PRECEDED BY A PARADE OF AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY AND FARMERS.—BERNAMA 1347/AH