

MAHATHIR-RUBBER
BM

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KUALA LUMPUR, SEPT. 13 ((BERNAMA))-- (DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE TODAY THAT MALAYSIA WOULD CONTINUE TO BE THE WORLD'S LEADING SUPPLIER OF RUBBER.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE COUNTRY WOULD BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN ITS PERFORMANCE OF PRODUCING 45 PER CENT OF THE WORLD'S SUPPLY OF THE COMMODITY.

+ WE WILL BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN OUR POSITION AS THE LARGEST PRODUCER OF RUBBER IN THE WORLD; + HE TOLD REPORTERS AFTER LAUNCHING THE RUBBER GROWERS' ASSOCIATION (RGA) MALAYSIA BHD AT THE HILTON HOTEL HERE.

HE WAS COMMENTING ON A PRESS REPORT TODAY THAT INDONESIA MIGHT OVERTAKE MALAYSIA AS THE LARGEST EXPORTER OF RUBBER IN THE WORLD.

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE INDONESIAN RUBBER PRODUCERS' FEDERATION, HARRY TANUGRAHA, WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT MALAYSIA, WHICH WAS NOW PRODUCING 1.7 MILLION TONNES OF RUBBER A YEAR COMPARED WITH THE 950,000 TONNES PRODUCED BY INDONESIA, WAS HAVING DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING THE SERVICES OF TAPPERS AND OTHER ESTATE MANPOWER.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE STATEMENT SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN LIGHTLY BUT ADDED THAT THERE WERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RUBBER INDUSTRY IN MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA. -- MORE 1804/OM

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THE PRIME MINISTER WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT, WITH THE EFFORTS OF THE RUBBER RESEARCH INSTITUTE (RRIM) TO LOOK FOR NEW TECHNIQUES IMPROVE THE TAPPING METHODS AND TO SOLVE THE LABOUR PROBLEM, THE OUTPUT OF RUBBER WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED.

HE SAID THERE WERE MANY PROPOSALS ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE RUBBER INDUSTRY, INCLUDING EFFORTS TO GROW RUBBER TREES THAT WERE LOW AND BIG TO FACILITATE TAPPING, AS WELL AS RUBBER REAFFORESTATION.

HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT NEW WAYS WOULD BE FOUND TO ENSURE INCREASED PRODUCTION OF RUBBER IN THE COUNTRY. -- BERNAMA 1807/OM