

84

BANDAR TUN ABDUL RAZAK (PAHANG TENGGARA), MARCH 10 (BERNAMA)--THE 83,000 FELDA SETTLERS IN THE COUNTRY HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF RAISING THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING WITH TODAY'S LAUNCHING OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC FUND FOR THEM.

THE FUND, LAUNCHED HERE BY PRIME MINISTER DATUK BERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD, HAS AN INITIAL CAPITAL OF \$10 MILLION. FELDA'S CORPORATIONS AND COMPANIES ARE EXPECTED TO CONTRIBUTE \$2 MILLION A YEAR TO IT.

THE FUND IS TO PROVIDE BUSINESS TRAINING TO SETTLER FAMILIES, SCHOLARSHIPS AND STUDY LOANS.

IT IS ALSO TO BUILD HOSTELS AND TEMPORARY LIVING QUARTERS AND TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL AID TO SETTLERS' ORGANIZATIONS.

ABOUT 40,000 SETTLERS FROM 10 SCHEMES IN THE KERATONG AREA WITNESSED THE LAUNCHING WHICH WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE RELEASING OF BALLOONS AND THE BEATING OF THE KOMPANG AND THE REBANA.-- MORE THE SETTLERS, MANY OF THEM CARRYING PLACARDS EXPRESSING THEIR APPRECIATION OF THE SCHEME, SHOUTED "LONG LIVE MAHATHIR" AND TOOK AN OATH OF LOYALTY.

DATUK BERI DR MAHATHIR, IN HIS ADDRESS, SAID THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FUND REPRESENTED ANOTHER EFFORT BY THE GOVERNMENT TO RAISE THE LIVING STANDARD OF THE SETTLERS.

HE SAID THAT FELDA SCHEMES, COVERING ONE MILLION HECTARES IN THE COUNTRY, REPRESENTED THE BIGGEST SETTLER PROJECT IN THE WORLD.

PROFITS FROM OIL PALM AND RUBBER CULTIVATION AT FELDA SCHEMES FAR EXCEEDED THOSE MADE BY PLANTATIONS OWNED BY COMPANIES LIKE HARRISONS AND CROSSFIELD SINE DARBY AND GUTHRIE, HE SAID.

LAND AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER DATUK RAIS YATIM SAID THE FUND WAS NOT A WELFARE FUND WHERE MONEY WAS GIVEN ON COMPASSIONATE GROUNDS. -- MORE 2003/PA

HE SAID THE FUND WAS FOR THOSE WHO WORKED HARD TO INCREASE THEIR PRODUCTIVITY AND IMPROVE THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING.

THE FUND WAS LAUNCHED IN PAHANG BECAUSE 41 PERCENT OF THE 650,000 HECTARES COVERED BY FELDA LAND SCHEMES WERE IN THE STATE, WHICH HAS 35,000 SETTLERS.

BEFORE THE LAUNCHING, DATUK BERI DR. MAHATHIR AND DATUK SERIDATIN PADUKA DR SITI HASMAH VISITED A KINDERGARTEN, A HANDICRAFT SCHOOL AND BUSINESS SITES IN THE KERATONG AREA.

THEY STOPPED AT THE HOUSE OF SETTLER ENCIK RAMLI ABDULLAH FOR REFRESHMENTS.

ENCIK RAMLI, WHO HAS TWO CHILDREN AND IS FROM KEDAH, HAD HIS PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. --BERNAMA 2010/PA