

# Statutory body move for FRI to expand

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**KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. —** The Forestry Research Institute (FRI) is to be turned into a statutory body so that it could play a bigger role in the development of the timber industry.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that this move was in line with stress on downstream activities and value-added products and would help FRI meet its manpower requirements and develop further.

The Cabinet, it is understood, had already approved the proposal to turn the institute into a statutory body in June.

last year but this has not been tabled in Parliament yet. He was happy to note that the basic and applied research carried out by FRI was directed towards practical ends and that when the institute had the necessary staff would be able contribute significant to the timber industry.

## Replanting

He also expected the manufacturers of timber-based products to be willing to come forward to finance research once they recognised the benefits they could reap by doing so.

was speaking to reporters after being briefed on FRI activities by its director Dr Salleh Mohamed Nor and shown the various projects carried out by the institute.

He said the Government would get foreign experts as well as train local staff to meet the institute's manpower requirements.

However the institute as with other Government was also facing the problem of staff being attracted by better salaries offered by the private sector.

He said the Government could not match the salaries of the private sector and thus needed those who were willing to

make some sacrifices for the nation.

The Prime Minister said the profits from the timber industry were not as high that from rubber and palm oil but they were related and attention would be focused on research on the potential of using rubber and especially palm oil woods for value-added products when they are being cleared for replanting.

He said those countries which have expressed concern over the clearing of forests in developing countries like Malaysia should back that concern by buying more value-added products of the timber industry.

Malaysia had also to think of her income requirements in managing her forest resources. A higher income from value-added timber-based products could replace the present income derived from logging and would thus help decrease the extent of logging activities.

He said the ban on the export of logs from Peninsular Malaysia from next year would not make much of dent in her foreign exchange earnings as it was only about 0.5 per cent of the current total log production.

He said most of the logs exported were from Sabah and Sarawak.

Primary Industries Minister Datuk Paul Leong had said yesterday that the ban was necessary to ensure that the domestic demand for logs was met.

Datuk Leong and Deputy Primary Industries Minister Encik Bujang bin Haji Uli also accompanied the Prime Minister during his visit today.