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BATU PAHAT, JUNE 28 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICY NOW IS TO EVOLVE A SMALL BUT PRODUCTIVE FARMING COMMUNITY SKILLED IN HANDLING MODERN TECHNOLOGY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THIS POLICY REQUIRED ONLY A SMALL NUMBER OF FARMERS BUT THEY MUST BE OF CALIBRE AND HAVE GREAT POTENTIAL FOR PRODUCTIVITY.

HE WAS SPEAKING AT THE OPENING OF THE \$1.1 MILLION SERI MEDAN INTEGRATED AGRICULTURAL SERVICES CENTRE, 22 KM FROM HERE, WHICH PROVIDES SERVICES TO 2,500 FARMING FAMILIES IN SERI MEDAN AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS.

THE CENTRE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, IS EQUIPPED WITH A WORKSHOP, CLASSROOM, STAFF QUARTERS AND A CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND.

IT IS PART OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES UNDER THE WEST JOHOR INTEGRATED AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME WHICH COVERS THE DISTRICTS OF PONTIAN, JOHOR BAHRU, BATU PAHAT, KLUANG AND MUAR. -- MORE

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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID AGRICULTURE IN MALAYSIA WAS UNEFFECTIVE AND UNPRODUCTIVE.

+THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF THE UNITED STATES WHICH HAS ONLY FIVE PER CENT OF ITS 260 MILLION POPULATION INVOLVED IN AGRICULTURE AND YET IT IS ABLE TO PRODUCE FOOD NOT ONLY FOR ITS OWN CONSUMPTION BUT ALSO FOR EXPORT,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WANTS THE FARMERS TO CHANGE THEIR ATTITUDE AND TO BE HARDWORKING AND DISCIPLINED TO BE ABLE TO COMPETE WITH THOSE IN THE UNITED STATES.

+WE WANT THE NUMBER OF FARMERS IN THE COUNTRY TO BE REDUCED BUT THEIR PRODUCTIVITY MUST INCREASE TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS AND TO PRODUCE MORE FOR EXPORT,+ HE ADDED.

ON SERI MEDAN, HE SAID THE CENTRAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS WERE AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS FACED BY THE RESIDENTS AND WERE WORKING TO OVERCOME THEM THROUGH THE WEST JOHOR INTEGRATED PROJECT. -- MORE
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HE SAID THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SPEND \$200 MILLION TO FURTHER DEVELOP THE PROJECT IN THE SECOND PHASE.

JOHOR MENTERI BESAR DATUK ABDUL AJIB AHMAD SAID THE STATE GOVERNMENT HOPED THAT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ABLE TO GIVE ITS SUPPORT SO THAT THE SECOND PHASE OF THE PROJECT COULD BE IMPLEMENTED DURING THE FIFTH MALAYSIA PLAN PERIOD FOR THE BENEFIT OF 50,000 RESIDENTS.

THE PRIME MINISTER LATER VISITED PARIT BASRI TO MEET THE PARIT SULUNG UMNO MEMBERS BEFORE FLYING BACK TO JOHOR BAHRU. -- BERNAMA
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