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MAHATHIR-FELDA
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KOTA TINGGI, JUNE 29 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY URGED FELDA TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH INTO OTHER CROPS THAT CAN BE CULTIVATED ON ITS SCHEMES INSTEAD OF DEPENDING ON ONE OR TWO AS IT IS DOING NOW.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE PROBLEMS THE COUNTRY'S NATURAL RUBBER HAD TO FACE, ESPECIALLY THE COMPETITION FROM SYNTHETIC RUBBER, SHOULD SERVE AS A REMINDER TO EVERYONE.

HE SAID THE NATURAL RUBBER INDUSTRY HAD NOT EXPECTED ANY PROBLEMS OR ANY COMPETITION, BUT WHEN THE PRICE OF RUBBER WENT UP THE ADVANCED COUNTRIES BEGAN TO LOOK FOR A SUBSTITUTE.

SPEAKING DURING A VISIT TO THE AIR TAWAR 2 FELDA SCHEME NEAR HERE, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID EVEN THOUGH OIL PALM WAS ONE OF MALAYSIA'S MAIN PRODUCE, CARE MUST BE TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT THE COUNTRY DID NOT BECOME OVER-DEPENDENT ON IT TO AVOID REPEATING THE EXPERIENCE WITH NATURAL RUBBER.

HE HOPED THAT FELDA, AS THE LARGEST ESTATE OWNER IN THE WORLD, WOULD BE FARSIGHTED AND UNDERTAKE IMMEDIATE RESEARCH INTO OTHER CROPS IN THE EVENT OF SYNTHETIC PALM OIL BEING PRODUCED ONE DAY. --
MORE

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MAHATHIR-FELDA 2 KOTA TINGGI

HE SUGGESTED THAT FELDA CHANGE ITS CONCEPT OF OPENING LAND SO THAT SETTLERS COULD PARTICIPATE AS WIDELY AS POSSIBLE IN ENSURING THE SUCCESS OF SUCH SCHEMES.

AT PRESENT, HE SAID, THE OPENING OF LAND SCHEMES AND PLANTING WERE CARRIED OUT BY CONTRACTORS, WITH THE SETTLERS MERELY BEING RECRUITED WHEN THE CROPS STARTED TO BEAR FRUIT.

THE NEW CONCEPT, HE SAID, SHOULD SEE THE SETTLERS THEMSELVES OPENING UP THE LAND, PREPARING THE SITE AND PLANTING THE CROPS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE EMPLOYMENT OF CONTRACTORS WAS MADE BECAUSE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT GAVE PRIORITY TO THE OPENING OF LAND ON A LARGE SCALE TO PROVIDE LAND TO THE LANDLESS.

BUT, THERE WAS NO URGENCY NOW, HE SAID, AND ADDED THAT THE SETTLERS THEMSELVES SHOULD HAVE A HAND IN OPENING UP THE SCHEMES RIGHT FROM THE START. -- MORE

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MAHATHIR-FELDA 3 KOTA TINGGI

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID FELDA WAS ONE OF MALAYSIA'S MOST SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONS AND HAD HELPED THE PEOPLE TO ATTAIN A LEVEL OF PROSPERITY THAT THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE NOT HAVE ENJOYED.

HE HOPED HIS SUGGESTION FOR THE NEW CONCEPT WOULD BE WELL-RECEIVED AMONG POTENTIAL AND NEW SETTLERS, SAYING THAT THIS WOULD FORESTALL ACCUSATIONS THAT THEY WERE NOT WILLING TO WORK HARD.

HE WAS GRATEFUL FOR THE COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE THAT THE SETTLER COMMUNITY HAD SHOWN IN ENSURING THE SUCCESS OF LAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONSIDERING THE REQUEST OF THE SETTLERS OF THE AIR TAWAR SCHEME FOR ELECTRICITY SUPPLY, A HEALTH CENTRE AND A POST OFFICE BUT ADDED THAT HOW SOON THESE AMENITIES WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED WOULD DEPEND ON THE COUNTRY'S FINANCES.

DURING THE VISIT, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR OPENED THE SCHEME'S PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, A PETROL KIOSK AND A MINI-MARKET.

HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY JOHOR MENTERI BESAR DATUK ABDUL AJIB AHMAD, LAND AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER DATUK SERI ADIB ADAM AND FEDERAL TERRITORY MINISTER DATUK SHAHRIR ABDUL SAMAD. -- BERNAMA

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