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BUTTERWORTH, AUG 6 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY TOLD FARMERS AND FISHERMEN TO STOP BEING DEPENDENT ON GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES, AND SAID THEY SHOULD NOT HOPE FOR ANY INCREASE IN SUCH ASSISTANCE.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT BY INCREASING SUBSIDIES, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO FORSAKE OTHER PROJECTS AS MONEY WOULD HAVE TO BE DIVERTED FROM OTHER SECTORS.

AT THE SAME TIME, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT WANT THE PRICE OF THEIR PRODUCE TO BE RAISED AS THIS WOULD AFFECT THE LOW-INCOME EARNERS.

AS IT WAS, THE GOVERNMENT WAS GIVING OUT SUBSIDIES TOTALLING MILLIONS OF RINGGIT TO FARMERS AND FISHERMEN, THE PRIME MINISTER ADDED WHEN LAUNCHING THE NATIONAL FARMERS' AND FISHERMEN'S DAY CELEBRATIONS AT SEBERANG JAYA HERE.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONSTANTLY UNDERTAKING MEASURES TO ENSURE THAT THE PEOPLE HAD ENOUGH FOOD WITHOUT CAUSING A BURDEN TO THE PRODUCERS OR THE CONSUMERS. -- MORE
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HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ALLOW THE UNRESTRICTED IMPORT OF RICE SO AS TO ENSURE THAT LOCALLY PRODUCED RICE COULD FETCH REASONABLE PRICES FOR THE BENEFIT OF RICE GROWERS.

ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PRICE OF LOCALLY PRODUCED RICE COULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO CLIMB TO TOO HIGH A LEVEL AS THE POOR COMPRISED NOT ONLY THE FARMERS THEMSELVES BUT FROM ALL TYPES OF OCCUPATIONS, HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE FARMERS SHOULD NOT FEEL THAT THE GOVERNMENT GAVE OUT SUBSIDIES TO BENEFIT ONLY CONSUMERS, ADDING THAT IT WAS DOING SO TO ENSURE THAT ALL QUARTERS CONCERNED DID NOT SUFFER

HE ALSO SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS REVIEWING THE PADI MARKETING AND FOOD PRODUCTION POLICIES TO ENSURE THAT THE PRICES WOULD NOT AFFECT THE FOOD REQUIREMENTS OF THE PEOPLE.

HE ADVISED FARMERS AND FISHERMEN TO KEEP UP WITH THE TIMES BY USING MODERN EQUIPMENT AND THE LATEST TECHNIQUES. -- MORE
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HE SAID THEY COULD NO LONGER DEPEND ON THE OLD WAYS IF THEY WANTED TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND INCOMES.

HE HOPED THEY WOULD WORK EVEN HARDER TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL, MODERN FARMERS WITH THE FACILITIES AND EXPERTISE PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

HE SAID THEY COULD COMBINE FORCES BY FORMING COOPERATIVES AND OTHER SUCH ORGANISATIONS TO DEVELOP THEIR LAND.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO ADVISED FARMERS AND FISHERMEN NOT TO FALL UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF +IRRESPONSIBLE+ ELEMENTS WHICH WANTED TO MAKE USE OF THEM FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT.

HE LATER PRESENTED PRIZES TO WINNERS OF VARIOUS COMPETITIONS FOR FARMERS AND FISHERMEN.

CHIEF MINISTER DR LIM CHONG EU AND AGRICULTURE MINISTER ENCIK ANWAR IBRAHIM WERE PRESENT. -- BERNAMA
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