

Accept changes, PM tells agri sector

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged farmers and fishermen to be receptive to changes and modern technology to help increase productivity.

The Prime Minister said they should learn new technology, for their returns would commensurate with their labour output.

"We must keep pace with modernisation and change. If we do not, we face the prospect of being left behind and perhaps become extinct," he said when launching the

Farmers' and Fishermen's Day celebrations at the Putra World Trade Centre. This year's theme is Increasing Productivity Through Technology.

Dr Mahathir said as mechanisation had resulted in increased productivity and minimised labour, farmers and fishermen should consider venturing into other fields.

"Farmers and fishermen must think of new ways that can benefit them. Through the use of modern technology, not all need to remain as farmers and fishermen. Some should think of

By **NURAINA SAMAD**

changing occupation because as long as they are dependent on human resources, they will be unable to increase productivity."

Dr Mahathir also advised farmers and fishermen not to be easily disappointed if the use of new technology did not give immediate results.

"There will always be teething problems. But if we work hard and adapt to these changes, we can overcome these problems."

Dr Mahathir said

farmers should not resist change but instead think hard of how this change could bring benefit in the long term.

He cited as an example, the use of outmoded fishing methods by local fishermen.

"When foreign fishermen encroach our waters using modern methods and catch more fish, we get angry. We should not. We should instead use the same method which will benefit us in the end."

He also spoke of how modern technology could be beneficial to one country but detrimental to another.

He said Indonesia, which once had to import rice from Thailand to feed its population, stopped doing so after it acquired modern technology.

Indonesia, he added, had benefited from modern technology at the expense of Thailand.

Dr Mahathir said although it would be cheaper for Malaysia to import rice from its neighbours, it could not do so as thousands of farmers would be made jobless.

Dr Mahathir was accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah and Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid.