

RENEW THE PIONEERING SPIRIT, SAYS PM

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By Lee Min Keong

BANDAR PUSAT JENKKA (Pahang), Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad told Felda settlers today to reinforce their pioneering spirit and not to depend too much on the Government.

The Prime Minister said a positive attitude was important for them to face challenges, including stiff competition by alternative commodities against palm oil and rubber.

He said the settlers must improve the quality of their produce and reduce production costs to overcome this competition.

"In other words, we have to improve on our performance, productivity and quality," Dr Mahathir said in a speech read out by Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Khalil Yaakob for the launch of the national Settlers' Day celebrations here.

(Datuk Khalil earlier told the thousands of settlers present that Dr Mahathir was down with flu and bouts of coughing and could not be with them).

Dr Mahathir said they must be forward looking and make use of modern technology if they did not want to be left behind because of rapid changes in society.

He said the Government had spent large sums of money to develop land schemes for settlers.

He hoped they would play their part in the development process and maintain harmony in the settler community.

Dr Mahathir said the work of settlers was an important contribution to downstream activities in the country.

He said that each step in the processing and marketing of commodities depended on the activities of the settlers.

The Prime Minister said the output of the agricultural sector made up 20 per cent of the total product of the economy.

Palm oil and rubber accounted for 48 per cent of the total output of the sector, he added.

Dr Mahathir said that Settlers Day held special meaning for settlers and the Government.

It meant the Government acknowledged the contribution of the settlers to the development of agricultural sector and the economy, he said.

In his speech, Datuk Seri Khalil warned settlers against a group which he said sought to cause trouble among them.

He said some of these people blamed falling commodity prices on government leaders.

They did not stop complaining even when the prices started to increase, he added.