

# Felda schemes will be re-organised says Mahathir

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By Azman Awalludin

GRIK, Thurs. — Felda schemes will be restructured to make the agency more economically sound and financially independent, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said this was because Felda, despite having 800,000ha under its projects, had been overly dependent on the Government for financial support.

"The Government has asked Felda to submit a report on its activities so that a study on its schemes can be carried out.

"We have to review the agency's role because it has asked for financial assistance from the Government every year. Some of its schemes might not be viable or practical," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this was ironical as Felda, despite being an agency with the most number of estates in the world, needed help from the Government while private estates which were much smaller, could do well on their own.

He said that it was not

easy for the Government to provide allocations for the agency as the money belonged to the Malaysian citizens.

"We have to question ourselves whether this (providing allocations to Felda) will truly benefit the country," the Prime Minister added after a visit to Pulau Banding near here on the first of a series of State visits.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir attended a briefing and dialogue with the heads of department at the District Office here. He also visited the Gugusan Nenering Felda scheme.

He expressed disappointment with the attitude of some local people who refused to work in agricultural projects.

As a result, foreigners had to be employed, he said. Dr Mahathir said a tea plantation in Lengong had to employ 26 workers from Bangladesh because no locals were willing to take the jobs.

"This is sad as we will have to bring in more and more foreigners to do jobs that can be done by the locals. Finally, the foreigners will become wealthy, leaving locals with no jobs," he added.