

Need to use modern ways to produce more food

Help reduce imports

PM urges farmers

By Kong Chun Meng

IPOH, Sun. — The Prime Minister today told farmers, livestock breeders and fishermen they can help reduce the country's import bill on food by improving their productivity.

He said through working harder and using more modern technology they could increase local food supply which while contributing towards savings in foreign exchange could keep the cost of living down.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that although it was the Government's aim to turn the country into an industrialised nation, it has not forgotten that agriculture, livestock breeding and fishery form the foundation of the country's wealth and the inamstay of the economy.

For this' reason the Government wanted farmers to take advantage of the fertile soil in the country to undertake modern farming through the use of machinery, modern methods of cultivation and high yielding strains.

Launching the National Farmers, Livestock Breeders and Fishermen's Day celebration at Medan Gopeng here, he said that over-reliance on food imports would lead to inflation and a price spiral which would make it meaningless to increase the salaries of workers.

Therefore, he said, it was necessary to have a strong agricultural and food industry to ensure that a major portion of the food consumed in the country was produced locally.

The Prime Minister said any excess food produced by farmers could be exported to increase national income. However, to be able to do this, they must ensure that the cost of production was low.

Dr Mahathir was given a rousing welcome by about 8,000 people when he arrived at the site about 9.30am. He was greeted by a kompong group.

Dr Mahathir said Thailand was one country where workers did not require high wages because its supply of food and other necessities was cheap and abundant.

He said he had been told this by his Thai counterpart, Gen Tun Chatichai Choonhavan, when they met in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

As a result of the relatively low cost of living in Thailand, wages there could be kept low and the country was able to achieve a high growth rate, he said.

The Prime Minister urged farmers to work hard to exploit the rich resources of the country by discarding the *pagi makan pagi, kais petang makan petang* (living from hand to mouth) attitude.

Although opportunities are aplenty in Malaysia, they would be wasted unless people were willing to work hard.

Stressing the need for intelligent use of technology, Dr Mahathir said

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technology might be defined as a new process which produced better results than old methods with less effort.

He said the use of technology also helped to overcome the shortage of manpower in the agricultural sector caused by youths being unwilling to carry on in the footsteps of their parents.

Later, he presented prizes to winners of the various competitions for farmers held in conjunction with the celebrations.

Among those present were Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Haji Ramli Ngah Talib, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayub, Deputy Foreign Minister Toh Muda Dr Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan, Perak Gerakan chairman Ong Tin Kim and State MCA Youth chairman Datuk Dr Soong Yong Pheow.