

PM: Farmers will help to increase food output

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BATU PAHAT, Sat. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has assured farmers the Government will provide all the necessary assistance to help them produce more food in line with the increasing demand in the country.

He said the Government wants farmers and fishermen to be efficient producers to ensure there is enough food for the rising population.

The rising population meant that farmers and fishermen had to carry a bigger burden of ensuring adequate food supplies, he said.

With the population increasing at 360,000 annually, there is also a growing market for agricultural

produce.

"The Government will ensure that we have enough food for all. That is why we need to give serious attention to food production," Dr Mahathir told a large gathering of farmers, fishermen and State dignitaries at the Tapak Pesta Kampung Kenangan Datuk Onn to celebrate Johor's Farmers Day.

He was accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Johor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

Dr Mahathir said the Government, through various projects and pro-

grammes, would continue to help farmers and fishermen meet national targets in food production.

Research and development will continue so that farmers can improve efficiency. One way of doing this is by using new technology and innovative farming methods.

Dr Mahathir cited Saudi Arabia as an example of a country that has overcome adverse farming conditions through modern methods. The Saudi Government, he said, has turned part of the desert into productive farms.

Wheat is among the crops produced in Saudi Arabia. Imports have been reduced as a result.

"With our resources, there is no reason why we

cannot produce more food using more efficient techniques in the years to come."

He appealed to farmers and fishermen not to be overly concerned with the Government's emphasis on industrialisation.

The Government assures the agriculture sector that it has no intention of neglecting such a vital sector of the nation's economy.

The Government realises that one of the ways of reducing the country's high food imports is through careful planning and effective implementation of agricultural projects.

In this regard, said the Prime Minister, co-operation among farmers, fishermen and the related Government agencies is necessary.