

Strive to be more efficient, PM tells farmers

By Manan Osman
7 AUG 1992
Sivakumar Kuttan

KUANTAN, Thurs. — Farmers, poultry breeders, fishermen and others involved in the agricultural sector need to improve their management skills and be more efficient in facing the challenges of the future.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today they must also develop a more professional approach towards farm work to bring out the best in terms of their produce.

The changing international trade practices, varied forms of protectionism and competition from countries producing similar kinds of agricultural produce were some of the problems the agricultural sector had to face as the nation moved towards the year 2020, he added.

Farmers, poultry breeders and fishermen must not take these challenges lightly in view of the fact that the agricultural sector was still the major income earner for the rural people.

Of equal importance was the fact that the sector supplied food to the country, he said when opening the 1992 National Farmers, Poultry Breeders and Fishermen's Day celebration at the Indera Mahkota Agricultural Park near here.

In trying to meet the country's future needs, farmers, poultry breeders and fishermen must be ready to accept changes aimed at improving not just their livelihood but the sector itself.

Objecting to changes would only slow down the process of making agriculture more modern, productive and efficient which would subsequently provide farmers with better income and standard of living.

He said those who stubbornly objected to changes would have a lesser chance of improving themselves.

The time would come when a decision would have to be made. Dr Mahathir said.

"If we want to be farmers, it is better that we prepare for any eventuality from now on and make the necessary preparations.

"Just as our towns are no longer confined to rows of single or double-storey shophouses but full of skyscrapers, the rural areas will undergo similar transformation where the vil-

PLEASE TURN
TO P2, COL 5

Migration of rural youths a problem

□ FROM PAGE ONE

lages will be restructured in the fringes of large estates belonging to co-operatives or plantation companies.

"Maybe there are those who are disappointed with the disappearance of the traditional villages. But changes had started to occur since rubber was brought to Malaysia."

"Our traditional kam-pungs are actually more often full of dilapidated, *pondok* (shack), dirty and without modern amenities," he said.

Leading a life against the background of swaying palms and the full moon might be beautiful as depicted in a painting, but to continue so might not be suitable for modern times, he added.

Dr Mahathir said good characteristics from the traditional village could be maintained but the village itself should be better restructured to reflect current lifestyles and needs.

Among those present at the opening were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Khalil Yaakob, Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Naini Tun Razak and other dignitaries.

One problem the agricultural sector would increasingly face was the migration of rural youths to the urban areas because they were more educated and the manufacturing industry provided better income and work comfort, Dr Mahathir said.

Countries which depended on the manufacturing industry for their economic growth would often have to face a shortage of workers in the agricultural sector.

When this happened, these countries would replace human resources with machinery because not only was this possible but, often machine operations were more efficient.

"Now machinery has already been used for a long time in Malaysia but efficiency is still lacking as management methods are more for small-scale farming and therefore, the best machinery cannot be utilised effectively," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that it would not be impossible for padi growers, orchard owners and vegetable farmers to increase their output if they adopted large-scale estate farming approaches.