

# Set up big firms, farmers told

By Syed Nadzri

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Farmers, fishermen and livestock breeders have been urged to set up large corporations to produce food for the nation as well as for export, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said professionals should also be employed to manage such corporations, even if it meant

hiring graduates from Harvard Business School.

He said the days of fishermen using fishing-tackle or livestock farmers having only 10 to 20 head of animals were over.

"In this competitive age, we have to be entrepreneurs. We have to organise ourselves in companies with modern and efficient facilities. It is the only way to make profit."

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the launch of the National Farmers, Livestock Breeders and Fishermen Day at Stadium Negara.

The event, attended by some 8,000 farmers and fishermen, included an exhibition on agriculture and a cultural performance.

Also present were Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi

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## Six farmers and three organisations get certs

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Junid, Health Minister Datuk Lee Kim Sai, Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Agriculture Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Ahmad Zabri Ibrahim.

Dr Mahathir said he had always emphasised on the need to be innovative and to keep up with the times.

"Many have adopted new techniques. But this alone is not enough. We have to change our ways by reorganising ourselves into giant companies that are modern and efficient and run by professionals.

"The companies must be run by managers who are well-trained, if possible from Harvard Business School. These people are knowledgeable and efficient in modern programmes."

Such companies, he said, should have its own re-

search and development unit and have capabilities in areas like packaging, canning and refrigeration.

He said the farmers and fishermen would not lose out in such schemes because they could become shareholders while leaving the day-to-day running of the companies to the professionals.

"It is better to be a small shareholder in a big company than the sole proprietor of a small company," he said, adding that if the companies were well-managed, the value of the shares would also increase.

He said a well-managed firm would also make it easier for their owners to obtain loans from financial institutions.

These loans, he said, could be used to buy sophisticated equipment, which would further improve their companies' performance.

"There have been complaints about difficulties in securing loans. But I know of a man who has no difficulty in obtaining an RM1.7 billion loan from a bank ... and he's a Malay.

"The crux of the matter is that if a person is trustworthy and has potential in business, he will not face difficulty in getting loans."

Dr Mahathir also presented certificates to six farmers and three organisations for their contributions in the agricultural field.

The recipients were Din Ahmad of Perlis, Marmin Ibrahim of Johor, Kidang Tampang of Malacca, Nafis Budin of Perak, Yusof Md Isa of Kedah and Khalidi Amprang of Selangor. The organisations were the Area Farmers Associations of Rompin (Pahang) and Mata Air (Perlis) and the Fishermen's Association of South Penang.