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Mahathir-Rural

MAHATHIR LAUNCHES MOVEMENT TO BRING PROGRSS TO RURAL AREAS

TELUK INTAN, July 4 -- A farmer in Malaysia should be able to manage a plot of at least 400 hectares and use various modern machinery by the year 2020 when the country achieves developed status, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"That's our wish when we think of Vision 2020. We don't want the rural community to be left behind when Malaysia becomes a developed nation," the Prime Minister said.

He said this when launching the Gerakan Desa Wawasan (Rural Vision Movement)

-- a programme aimed at making kampungs and other rural areas to be more progrssive, attractive and profitable -- at Felcra Seberang Perak near here today.

Also present were Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib, Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa, and state executive council members in charge of agriculture and rural development.

The Prime Minister said that in 2020, Malaysian farmers could be wholly self reliant with skilled local labour to manage their large scale estates.

Towards this end, the government had launched the Gerakan Desa Wawasan with the aim of moulding a rural society which kept abreast of rapid national development.

"This is the government's hope and also that of the people. To manage estates in a modern way, however, we have to change our way of thinking and working," he said.

Dr Mahathir said rural society had no choice but to change in keeping with the winds of change blowing across the country.

Subsistence farming should not be around when Malaysia became a developed nation, he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians, especially those in the rural areas, must have the confidence that they could become successful modern farmers.

By becoming modern farmers, he said, they could not only earn more but also help to overcome the manpower shortage prpbblem.

"We don't want to depend on foreign workers anymore as the money they earn is not spent in this country but sent back to the country of origin. In the end, we are the ones who lose out," he said.

The Prime Minister said Malaysians had proven time and again that they could do something better than others if they really wanted to.

This could be seen from the fact that Malaysia is held as an example by many other countries for its achievements in various fields, he added. --

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