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`Increase farm output to reduce imports'

Saiful Azhar Abdullah; K. Bala

LANGKAWI, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called for optimum use of resources to increase agricultural output, especially food items, to reduce imports.

He said during the economic slowdown it was important to minimise the outflow of revenue for imported goods including agricultural products.

Launching a new organic fertiliser at Laman Padi in Pantai Chenang, Dr Mahathir said the yields of existing crops should be increased through research and development.

The organic fertiliser called Terus Maju is produced by Invigorant Maju Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Maju Holdings Berhad.

The fertiliser, which was developed by Invigorant Maju's executive director, Loh Boh Lee, is said to help increase padi and vegetable yields by between 14 per cent and 75 per cent.

Dr Mahathir said the use of environment-friendly organic fertilisers should be promoted.

Earlier, Maju Holdings executive chairman Datuk Abu Sahid Mohamed said the fertiliser also helped the produce to mature earlier besides reducing the cost of production.

He said research on padi and vegetables had been undertaken in various parts of the country, including the padi museum, Laman Padi.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir visited the Langkawi Lagoon project being undertaken by Kumpulan Emkay Holdings Sdn Bhd.

He was briefed on the project by its executive chairman, Datuk Mustapha Kamal Abu Bakar.

The project involves the construction of a shopping complex, a clubhouse and wooden bungalows on stilts.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said the people should take advantage of the tax exemption for yacht and luxury craft servicing and maintenance in Langkawi.

Dr Mahathir, who is also First Finance Minister, had announced this during the 1999 Budget report on Friday.

Dr Mahathir and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, also attended the wedding of Agriculture Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Abu Bakar Taib's daughter at Taman Desa Kemboja.

(END)