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Palm oil

MALAYSIA TO SEND PALM OIL TECHNICAL MISSION TO VENEZUELA

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 16 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will send a technical mission to Venezuela and Columbia to study whether these countries are suitable for oil palm cultivation, Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said today.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had told him that the Venezuelan President Dr Rafael Caldera was impressed with Malaysia's success in developing massive rural land development programmes especially palm oil plantations and using it as a means to create jobs and solve rural poverty.

"Dr Mahathir told me that this was discussed during his talks with Caldera while attending the G15 summit in Jamaica recently," Lim told reporters at the Gerakan Chinese New Year open house at the party headquarters in Cheras near here.

Lim said Colombian Foreign Minister Dr Maria Emma Mejia Velez who visited Malaysia two weeks ago had requested Malaysia's assistance in oil palm cultivation.

The technical team would prepare reports on the potential of opening up palm oil plantations in those countries, he said.

Lim said other Latin American countries like Brazil was also interested in cultivating oil palm especially in the southern part of the country.

He said Malaysian investors were quite aware of the potential of oil palm cultivation in those countries.

However they were quite reluctant get involved due to various factors such as land ownership policy applied to foreign companies, he said.

Another problem, he said, was the question of capital investment to start off and as developing countries, loan from international financial institution like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank was crucial.

But unfortunately both financial institutions were not sensitive and had not opened their eyes on the potential of these countries in massive palm oil plantations.

He said the IMF and World Bank had put out various terms and conditions before approving loans such as the project must not destroy forests and must be environmental friendly.

"It these conditions were set 20 years ago when Malaysia started its rural land development programme, we could never see the success of Felda land schemes and millions of hectares of palm oil plantations," he added.

He said Malaysia could be proud of the fact that despite destroying forest for rural land development, 58 per cent of her land area was still covered with forests.

--BERNAMA

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