

30/08/1999

Planting of fragrant rice under study

TELUK INTAN, Sun. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has directed that a study be conducted on the feasibility of planting fragrant rice padi to reduce imports as a result of the increasing demand.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayub said the Prime Minister issued the directive during a meeting with him two weeks ago.

Also present at the meeting was Padi Beras Nasional Bhd managing director Mohd Ibrahim Nor.

Megat Junid said a study covering numerous aspects such as suitability of land, seeds, marketing and the risk of diseases, would be carried out by the Agriculture Ministry and Bernas.

He said the planting of this species of padi was currently disallowed due to the risk of disease affecting other types of padi.

He was speaking during a meeting with about 100 farmers who had planted the fragrant rice padi on 400ha in Chui Chak, Langkap, near here. The farmers had been planting this type of padi without any problem for the past six years.

Megat Junid said he had sought a meeting with the Prime Minister in his capacity as Pasir Salak Member of Parliament to forward a complaint from some 800 farmers in Chui Chak opposing the ban imposed by the Agriculture Ministry earlier this year.

Megat Junid said if the padi was found suitable and resistant to disease, the ban would be lifted.

Some time ago a fungus-like disease destroyed padi stalks in Perlis. The Agriculture Ministry confirmed the seeds were sourced from Chui Chak and issued circulars to farmers that they could be fined up to RM10,000 for defying the ban.

At present, the country imports about 150,000 tonnes of fragrant rice a year.

(END)