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`Review conversion of rubber estates to palm oil plantations'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - MIC delegates today requested the Government to review the indiscriminate conversion of rubber estates into oil palm plantations.

Resolution committee chairman Datuk S. Subramaniam said the Government should take steps to maintain the rubber estates because the price of rubber at international markets would pick up in future. He said there should be a healthy balance between strategic industrial crops such as rubber and oil palm.

There were also suggestions to enact policies and legislations to protect rubber as a strategic industrial crop during debate on the resolutions.

Subramaniam added if the situation was unavoidable the displaced rubber plantation workers should be retrained to work in other fields.

"They should also get adequate compensation if they are retrenched." Another resolution thanked the Information Ministry for switching the Tamil news hour from 5pm to 5.30pm.

"When it was aired at 5pm, it was unsuitable as the viewers would not have been back from work or were on their way back," he said. The new transmission time starts today.

The other resolutions drawn by the committee comprising Datuk G. Palanivel, Datuk M. Kumaran, Tan Sri G. Vadiveloo and Datuk P. Krishnan and which were approved were:

- * throwing the party's undivided and wholehearted support for the continued leadership of the Government and Barisan Nasional by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad;

- * for the Human Resources Ministry to immediately review and implement the Five Year Development Plan to upgrade or replace the poor quality and dilapidated houses in the estates in conformity with minimum standards, and adequate supply of electricity and water and construction of proper roads;

- * supporting the Government's move to abolish the South Indian Labour Fund;

- * urging the Government to expedite approval for and a grant for the medical college in Kedah;

- * urging the Education Ministry to equip an "adequate" number of Tamil schools with computers and other facilities, to provide agricultural land for rural Indians to enable them to engage in food production; and,

- * welcoming the move by the Government and the National Unity and Social Development Ministry to introduce the Guardianship of Infants (Amendments) Act which recognises the mother as a legal guardian and paves the way for mothers to have equal say in custody matters.

K. Jeyaraman from Kedah suggested that plantations workers be called skilled workers as more sophisticated equipment was being introduced for tapping rubber.

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