

03 JUL 1999

Mahathir-Agriculture

STRENGTH OF AGRICULTURAL AND TOURISM SECTORS SHOULD BE STUDIED - PM

KUALA LUMPUR, July 3 (Bernama) -- The strength of the agricultural and tourism sectors needs to be studied deeply to maximise their contribution to economic development in facing the new millennium, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"In preparing for the new millennium, it's imperative that we study the strength of the agricultural and tourism sectors and maximise their contribution for our common good and that of the future generation," he said when launching the Malaysian Agriculture, Horticulture and Agro-tourism Exhibition 1999 (MAHA'99) at the Bukit Jalil Sports Complex, here tonight.

In line with the policy to diversify and optimise resource utilisation to overcome the economic crisis, he said it was important to develop the economy in total and strengthen the links between the various sectors, not only between the agricultural and manufacturing sectors but also between the agricultural and tourism sectors.

"In this context, we must pool our capabilities to maintain our excellence in research and industrial development as well as new agricultural products from primary commodities and natural resources such as flowers, decorative fish, food products including herbs and vegetables taken raw or 'ulam' as well as handicrafts," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government was reviving the Agricultural and Horticultural Exhibition (MAHA) which used to be popular in the sixties and seventies as it was confident the exhibition would benefit the target groups and those involved in the development of the agricultural and tourism sectors as well as other related sectors.

He said beginning this year the atmosphere and merriment of MAHA would be retained by making adaptations in its approach and introducing new activities to portray changes in economic development as well as the peoples' lifestyle and taste.

He said the MAHA'99 is celebrated at the federal and state levels for three months beginning today.

A Floral Carnival will add colour to the celebrations including the exhibition and sale of agricultural and tourist products as the curtain raiser simultaneously with the Floral Festival which will be held until July 11, said Dr Mahathir.

The Prime Minister said apart from the promotion of tourism potentials and destinations, food and beverage carnivals focussing on agricultural products particularly vegetables taken raw and certain fruits as well as the Visit Negeri Sembilan and Pulau Pinang Year would also be held.

Dr Mahathir said the climax of the MAHA celebration would be the national level Farmers, Breeders and Fishermen Day as well as the Asian Agricultural Convention and Exposition 1999 which would be held simultaneously from Aug 26 to 31.

He urged everyone particularly the state governments, the private sectors, farmers, breeders and fishermen to join in and contribute towards the success of MAHA'99.

He said their participation would benefit them because through MAHA'99, the farmers, breeders and fishermen would obtain valuable information on the opportunities and investment potentials in the sectors concerned.

At the same time, students and members of the public would get exposure and receive the latest knowledge on technology and development of the

tourism industry, agriculture as well as agro-based industry in the country and abroad.

Dr Mahathir said that through the MAHA'99 too, intellectuals comprising researchers, scientists and academicians would be able to exchange opinions and experiences through conferences, conventions and seminars at the national and international levels.

He said entrepreneurs including foreign investors would also benefit from MAHA'99 where apart from obtaining information on investment incentives and potentials in the agricultural and tourism sectors, they would also have the opportunity to interact and establish network with investors, entrepreneurs and state governments.

On the tourism industry, Dr Mahathir said MAHA'99 would enable tourists to stay longer in the country and promote Malaysia as an international conference, convention and exhibition centre.

He said this was because tourists and those involved in the tourism industry would be able to enjoy the variety of food from the various communities and buy local handicrafts apart from obtaining the latest information on tourism potentials and to see the beauty of Malaysia with her rich flora and fauna.

Dr Mahathir said since the implementation of the tourism programmes under the Sixth Malaysia Plan, the tourism industry became the main contributor to national revenue with the sector attracting 5.5 million tourists spending RM9.3 billion last year.

--BERNAMA

AKT AO