

18/01/2000

Council on boosting agri sector to be set up

Patrick Sennyah

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to launch a private sector consultative council on agricultural development in March.

Agriculture Minister Datuk Mohd Effendi Norwawi said the council was aimed at forming new policies and procedures to accelerate private sector investments in the sector.

"This is part of the ministry's efforts to increase contributions from the agricultural sector towards the economy and to reduce the increasing national food import bill," he said after a signing ceremony between the Government and the International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management (ICLARM) for the establishment of ICLARM's headquarters in Malaysia.

He said the council would also be responsible for monitoring the progress achieved by the agricultural sector under the Third National Agricultural Policy. He said he would chair a co-ordinating committee which would be responsible for sorting out State land matters with regard to agricultural use.

"We will invite all State Executive Councillors in charge of agriculture to be members of this co-ordinating committee," he said.

These efforts, he hoped, would not only increase contributions from the agricultural sector but also generate new industries within the sector to produce more high-value products.

On the signing ceremony, Mohd Effendi said it marked the first step of co-operation between Malaysian fisheries researchers and ICLARM.

He said more than a billion people worldwide relied on fish as a source of protein while a further 150 million depended on the seas for employment.

"The world population is increasing daily and many fisheries worldwide are either being over exploited or fully exploited, posing a serious threat.

"Under these circumstances, the efforts of ICLARM as the only international centre involved in fisheries and other living aquatic resources research are very noble and highly commendable," he said.

At present the Department of Fisheries is involved in three projects with ICLARM, which are the Tropical Fish Stock Assessment Project, Fisheries Co-Management Project and the International Network on Genetics in Aquaculture.

The ICLARM is an autonomous, non-profit, international scientific and technical centre which conducts, stimulates and accelerates research on all aspects of fisheries, aquaculture and the management of living aquatic resources.

ICLARM's new headquarters will be located on a 5.235ha site in Batu Maung, Penang, adjacent to the Fisheries Training Institute and will start operations on Feb 15.

(END)