

22 JUL 2000

Mahathir-Hate

EFFORTS TO PROMOTE AGRICULTURE WILL FACE PROBLEMS

KUALA LUMPUR, July 22 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said efforts to bring about changes for the benefit of the people and country, including agricultural modernisation to ensure that farmers are not poverty-stricken, are facing political problems.

The Prime Minister said that as soon as efforts were taken to introduce something that could bring progress to agriculture, there would be politicians making all kinds of allegations and slanderous remarks merely for political gains.

"The fact that their efforts at instilling hatred among certain groups would only be to the detriment of the groups concerned was totally ignored by them (instigators).

"What is important to them is that the hatred for the government will benefit their political cause," he said when opening the Malaysian Agricultural, Horticultural and Agro-Tourism (MAHA) Exhibition 2000 at the Bukit Jalil Sports Complex, here today.

For example, he said, when the government spent hundreds of millions of Ringgit for the Muda Irrigation System to enable double cropping and improve the farmers' income, the opposition criticised the government and alleged that the farmers were being forced to work throughout the year.

Now, he said, such irresponsible talks were no longer heard and, on the contrary, those people who had previously hurled accusations and tried to sabotage the Muda Irrigation Project were now enjoying the benefits and planting padi twice a year.

Dr Mahathir believed that when the government tried to introduce innovations to improve productivity in agriculture and raise the farmers' income, certain groups would make wild allegations.

"There will certainly be allegations that the government is trying to take away the farmers' rights, exploiting them and so on. Such allegations would frustrate the implementation of the Agricultural Vision and the victims eventually will be none other than the poor farmers themselves," he said.

As such, he said, others would benefit from the agricultural modernisation that would be introduced.

The Prime Minister said if not for the obstacles created by these politicians for their political gains, Malaysia would have been far more progressive and the people would have enjoyed much more benefits than they do now.

-- BERNAMA

MNY AO