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Mahathir-Agriculture

PM TELLS PRIVATE SECTOR TO EXPLOIT PUBLIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE FINDINGS

KUALA LUMPUR, April 2 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants the private sector to make full use of findings of public research and development (R&D) institutes in commercial ventures for the benefit of both parties and also the country.

He said that the private sector could adopt the findings of public research institutes like the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (Mardi) and make investments for large-scale production.

"Mardi has adequate capability and expertise in R&D...the only problem is that not many make use of its R&D findings," he told a news conference after visiting the Mardi headquarters in Serdang near here today.

Dr Mahathir said that if the private sector were to adopt Mardi's findings, the institute could obtain better returns which could be further used for more extensive research and development.

He believed that the private sector would also be able to chalk higher profits through large-scale production and marketing strategy like better packaging and promotion.

The prime minister said that the true benefits of Mardi's R&D findings could not be fully appreciated for as long as efforts at establishing commercial agricultural ventures fail to materialise.

Dr Mahathir said he had full confidence that Malaysia's agricultural produce had very vast commercial potential including Mardi's latest R&D findings that the hibiscus cannabinus tree had many uses.

During the visit, the prime minister saw how high quality items like durable paper, chipboard, animal feed and fibre glass could be produced from the bark of the tree.

Dr Mahathir also said the government was giving a lot of attention to agriculture but people were more keen to buy and sell shares as an easy way out.

If people were more serious in agriculture, it would be easier to make it as an engine of economic growth, he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that the government was aware that the salary paid to Mardi's researchers or scientists was lower than those in universities or the private sector.

As such, he said, the government was prepared to conduct a study to ensure that they remained with Mardi in view of the fact that many were interested to join the academic field where there were more chances for promotion.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Minister Datuk Mohamed Effendi Norwawi said that Mardi should be competitive to attract researchers.

On the possibility of the private sector adopting Mardi's R&D findings, Mohamed Effendi said that the Public Domain Act was under review by the Attorney-General's Chambers for amendments to be made.

The proposed amendments would hopefully pave the way for more participation of the private sector in researches with Mardi, he said.

Dr Mahathir spent about four hours observing Mardi's R&D findings that could be adopted for commercial agricultural ventures.

Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding was also present at the close-door discussion between Dr Mahathir and Mardi officials.

In conjunction with the visit, Dr Mahathir witnessed the exchange of

documents between Mardi and Glowing Hill Sdn Bhd for the production of low cholesterol eggs.

Mardi was represented by Agriculture Ministry's Secretary-General Datuk Abi Musa Asaari Mohamed Nor while Glowing Hill's chairman Datuk Annuar Musa signed on behalf of his company.

Mardi will hold its open day in conjunction with its 30th anniversary at its headquarters from April 5 to 8. April 6 has been fixed for the private sector to view opportunities for cooperation with Mardi.

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