

Plan to reintroduce One Village, One Product scheme

Nst - 8 JUL 2002

MALAYSIA introduced the "One Village, One Product" scheme earlier than Thailand, but it was the Thais who made further progress on this scheme, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Therefore, the Government planned to reintroduce the scheme to help farmers and fishermen increase their earnings.

"Yes, we want to reintroduce ... we want farmers to see (the One Village, One Product scheme in Thailand) and learn how to earn additional income," he told Malaysian journalists.

The Prime Minister said his Thai counterpart Thaksin Shinawatra had agreed that if Malaysia was to send a delegation, especially from the rural areas, those in the scheme in Thailand would exhibit their products.

"Of course, our farmers will not be able to produce the same products but we hope that they will have the idea on what the "One Village, One Product" scheme means rather than just concentrate on growing watermelon or pomelos."

Dr Mahathir said the scheme had been introduced in Malaysia, Kedah in particular, but was not as successful as in Thailand as too many people jumped on the bandwagon for one product.

"It is our Malaysian custom that when somebody succeeds in doing something, everybody wants to do the same.

"If you go to Kedah, there are many people selling watermelons, a mountain of watermelons. Of course, we cannot sell a mountain of watermelons in one season."

Dr Mahathir said compared with factory workers who worked six days a week, farmers only worked three months and the rest of the year they were not productive.

"Thus, they can never expect to have sufficient income from padi farming. In Malaysia, the cost of rice produced is higher than in other countries.

"If they want to supplement their income, they must take up other activities during their free time. They can make baskets, bamboo products, satay sticks, toothpicks and chopsticks. I am disappointed that the souvenirs given to tourists are imported from other countries."

On the fishing industry, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had requested that Thai fishermen who frequently fished in Malaysian waters set up their fish-landing and processing plants in Malaysia.

He said Malaysia also encouraged Thai fishermen to set up joint ventures for fishing exploration in Malaysian waters.