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LOCATION OF LAND SUITABLE FOR
IMMEDIATE SETTLEMENT AND
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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ECONOMIC PLANNING UNIT
PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT
MALAYSIA

JUNE, 1966

REPORT ON: LOCATION OF LAND SUITABLE FOR IMMEDIATE
SETTLEMENT AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

A Report by a Sub-Committee of the Technical Sub-Committee on
Land Capability Classification.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Among the long-term objectives for increasing the role of agriculture in the overall growth pattern of the economy, stress is laid in the First Malaysia Plan on the need for an accelerated expansion of output and employment in the agricultural sector by increasing the land area under cultivation, and the largest allocation of public resources in the agricultural sector during the First Malaysia Plan period is for land development.

It is estimated that at least 65,000 families need to be settled on newly opened land in Malaya by the end of 1970, and to meet this need about 400,000 to 450,000 acres will have to be opened up. These figures can be contrasted with the figure of 12,000 families settled on 145,000 acres in FIDA schemes during the Second Malayan Plan period, and possibly a similar acreage of land for a rather larger number of families settled under various State Government schemes during the same period. This comparison gives a measure of the increase in the rate of land development which must take place in the near future if the plan objectives are to be attained.

In Malaya, the FIDA will develop an additional 32,000 acres on existing schemes and initiate new schemes covering 105,000 acres during the First Malaysia Plan period. The emphasis will be on oil palm, and 99,000 of the total 137,000 acres will be opened up to this crop, with the remainder planted to rubber.

The land development programme also calls for 150,000 acres to be opened up by other Government land settlement schemes, including those for controlled alienation, while in addition land will be opened up through fringe alienation in order to supplement the acreages of those of the rural community who have insufficient land.

It is hoped that with the liberalization of State land alienation policies, permitting alienation to private companies, private estates development will meet the remaining need for new land settlement over the five year period.

Large areas of potential agricultural land occur in Malaya, and it is estimated that there are approximately 9,400,000 acres of such land. Of course, not all of this land could in practice be developed for agricultural purposes, as much of it will be required for other purposes including mining and urban development while other areas, such as deep peat swamps may be of very limited suitability at the present time and are likely to remain uncultivated for many years to come. Furthermore, much of the land in the potential agricultural use category is already gazetted for alternative use purposes, mainly as forest and game reserves, while the areas categorised as State land, which are the areas theoretically available for agricultural development without serious conflict with other pre-determined use purposes, are unevenly scattered over the country, and are often situated far from existing access routes.

Nevertheless, with careful site selection it should be possible to meet the predicted needs at least until the end of the present century. With careful national and regional planning it should be possible to meet the needs during the current five-year plan period largely from existing areas of State land, thus causing the least disturbance to the existing pattern of reserves.

During the Second Malaysia Plan period and subsequently greater inroads will have to be made in certain gazetted reserves for purposes of agricultural development, if the maximum use of the land resources within a sound conservation context is to be attained. This will imply the acceptance of a realistic land use policy and the application of this policy through the medium of comprehensive regional land use plans.

It is already apparent that the land capability maps, which are presently being assembled, will provide an appropriate aid to development planning of this nature, and the completion of a land capability classification cover for the States of Malaya is a priority objective of the First Malaysia Plan. It is hoped that this cover will be available for all districts in the States of Malaya by the middle of 1969.

During the interim period pending the completion of the land capability classification programme, the selection of areas for immediate development must necessarily be made in a rather ad hoc manner, owing to the inadequacy of the natural resource data at a national, and often even at a state or district, level.

This paper reviews the existing data on land availability and attempts to list some of the areas in which agricultural development might appropriately be located during the interim period, and particularly during the current 12 month period from the date of publication of this report.

The areas selected as suitable for settlement and agricultural development have been chosen mainly from State land and Malay reserve areas, on the basis of physical suitability, including access, and the list has been prepared as an aid to discussion and planning for development, and is in no sense intended to be final. Plans may already be in hand for developing some of these areas, while other equally good areas may have been omitted owing to inaccurate or inadequate data. The list has been prepared primarily from federal sources of information.

Any development which may take place in the areas suggested is of course conditional on the acceptance of the proposals by the State Governments, who are the authorities ultimately responsible for allocation of the land in question.

II. Factors in Selection

Problems of site suitability for cultivation are mainly dependent on climatic, topographic, soil, and drainage conditions but problems of land availability in relationship to other use purposes, and problems of access are of equal importance in selecting land for agricultural development.

Climate

Climatic conditions influence the suitability for crop growth from one part of Malaya to another, and the normal range of tropical crops are seldom found growing above the 1,000 foot contour. In places the climate in the lowlands can be considered marginal for crops such as cocoa, sugar cane or oil palm owing either to the unsatisfactory nature of the seasonal rainfall pattern or to the annual figure being outside the normal range of tolerance for the particular crop. Rainfall and other climatic data are very often inadequate for making crop recommendations in those areas where agricultural development potentials are greatest, owing to the lack of existing rainfall stations in the undeveloped and sparsely populated regions.

Topography

Over 43% of Malaya is known to be too steeply sloping and mountainous for extensive agricultural development, and most of this land occurs in the northern part of the country and particularly in the States of Perak, Pahang, Kelantan, Tringganu and Selangor. While mapping standards are high, and the map coverage is good compared with neighbouring countries, contour maps on a scale of one inch to a mile showing accurate details of the topography still remain to be published

for about 16% of the country. The gap occurs mainly in the undeveloped areas, which increases the difficulty of site selection in many of the places where the opportunities for development may be greatest.

Soil

Soil type is extremely variable throughout Malaya, and the soils vary from highly fertile to very infertile. A soil suited to one crop is not necessarily suited to another, and no crop can compete with rubber in respect of its range of soil suitability under Malayan conditions. The differing soils tolerance of the alternative crops to rubber therefore restricts the area over which these crops can be grown. Soil surveys, of a reconnaissance nature, have now been completed for approximately 76% of Malaya. However, the biggest unsurveyed area is in Pahang where the conditions over large areas of forest land are otherwise suitable for extensive agricultural development, and where the opportunities for settlement are therefore likely to be greatest.

The available soil maps are termed schematic-reconnaissance maps, and these maps, while very useful for answering questions of broad soil suitability, are not sufficiently detailed for large scale agricultural development planning purposes, and need to be augmented by more detailed reconnaissance soil maps in specific development areas.

Drainage

Watertable conditions make certain areas of soil unsatisfactory for agricultural development, particularly in the coastal regions. Large areas of peat and mangrove swamp covering parts of the coastal plains along the west coast are too low-lying or otherwise unsuitable for drainage and agricultural development, while large areas of coastal sand along the east coast restrict agricultural development owing to the free draining nature of the soil, the great depth to the watertable, and the low level of inherent fertility.

Acquisition

In addition to the problem of site suitability which depends on the natural conditions, as explained above, there are problems of acquisition which stem from the land alienation and gazettment pattern which has been established in the course of time. In addition to the areas of alienated land, which has been leased for agricultural, mining, and urban development purposes, and which cover about 26% of the country, approximately a further 30% has been gazetted for various types of reservation. Such areas include forest reserves, which cover more than 26% of the country, while the remainder comprise mainly game reserves and national parks. These reserves are often situated on areas of high quality soil which are eminently suitable for agricultural development. While re-allocation of certain of these reserves for agricultural development purposes is possible it has not been a common occurrence in the past, but the increasing need for agricultural land in recent years has emphasised the unsatisfactory position of many of these reserves with respect to a rational future land use pattern.

It is not suggested that an immediate change-over from forest to agriculture is necessary in these reserves, but a gradual transfer is certainly desirable in some areas, and such a realignment is allowed for in the Interim Forest Policy Paper which has recently been prepared. Alterations to the existing gazettment pattern will however only be carried out after a thorough study has been made of the regional resource potentials over the area in question. Such studies, known in Malaya as land capability classification

studies, are being systematically undertaken during the current five-year planning period.

In addition to indicating the areas of gazetted land which could be profitably developed for agriculture, or mining, these classification studies will also indicate the areas which are not gazetted for reserve purposes at the present time and which could be better used for such purposes, rather than utilised for agriculture. Until the results of a land capability classification study are available it would however be inappropriate to de-gazette large areas of forest or other reserve, and for this reason large scale agricultural development will be necessarily have to take place mainly in the available areas of State land, at least during the early years of the First Malaysia Plan.

Game reserves are principally situated in northeast Pahang and in Johore. The Johore reserves in particular contain large areas of land suitable for agriculture, and a policy which includes provision for relating game reserve boundaries to the resource potentialities in the surrounding areas, similar to that already proposed for forest reserves, is desirable. In the meantime it would be advisable if large scale acquisition of any area in forest or game reserve for agricultural development was only made in conformity with a carefully prepared regional development plan.

The problems of site selection for agricultural development are further complicated by the fact that many areas of State land and forest reserves need to be worked for timber prior to clearing and planting. Because of this requirement, a period of postponement running into years may be occasioned in some of the large development regions. In other areas the forest may be undergoing a cycle of selective regeneration following initial forest exploitation and the heavy financial outlay involved must be written off if the land is acquired for agriculture before the cycle is complete.

Malay reserves are not uncommon in certain States, and these areas further restrict the availability of land for certain types of agricultural development. Aborigine reserves are less extensive but can present similar if not more severe problems.

Illegal cultivation is widespread in certain areas, and this acts as a further brake on extensive agricultural development, particularly in the case of FLDA type schemes and other means of development involving a high degree of centralised control, where the presence of illegal cultivators may only be discovered after plans for development are well advanced.

Access

Road access presents serious problems in many potential agricultural areas, as the existing road system mainly serves the developed regions of the country. Agricultural development during the past ten years has been mainly confined to those areas situated within a few miles of the existing road system, and roads constructed primarily for opening up agricultural land have been largely confined to access routes leading to FLDA schemes sited at relative short distances from the existing roads. Very little land suitable for agricultural development now remains undeveloped in the neighbourhood of the present road system, and new rural roads are needed specifically to give access into most areas where large agricultural development potentialities exist. Medium length roads, up to ten miles long will suffice in some areas but many of the areas with the greatest agricultural potentials could be opened up only if major highways are constructed.

III. Possible Land Development Areas

From a comparison of the data on natural resources prepared by federal survey organisations with that for land alienation and gazettment which are available from State Survey and Land Office sources, facilitated by the use of criteria established for purposes of land capability classification mapping, it is possible to select areas in which immediate development opportunities for agricultural settlement schemes are greatest, and in the following paragraphs such an assessment is made on a State by State basis.

The reference sources used include Land Capability Classification reports for four districts in Pahang and certain items of resource contributory data for the remaining four districts, while for the remaining States the reference sources consulted include topographic maps, Red Book development maps and soil survey reports, supplemented by personal knowledge and verbal inquiry.

1. PAHANG

The evidence indicates that Pahang has the greatest agricultural development potential of any State in Malaya. This potential occurs almost entirely in the lowland areas in the south, centre and northwest of the State, while the mountain ranges of the northeast and west, and the swamps along the east coast possess negligible potentials. This potential is unevenly spread over the eight administrative districts, with Temerloh and Pekan districts having the greatest areas of unutilised potential agricultural land, and with Cameron Highlands at the other extreme. To date land capability classification studies have been completed for Kuantan, Bentong, Temerloh and Pekan districts and in consequence the most precise data for agricultural development opportunities are available for these four districts. The prospects for each of these districts is considered below:

Kuantan district

This district is known to present very considerable opportunities for agricultural development mainly towards the southwestern border and in the east-central section, while the north and centre is occupied by steeply sloping mountain ranges which are definitely unsuitable for agricultural settlement and development. The southeast and northeast corners of the district consist mainly of swamps which are not suitable for agriculture. The east-west highway (Route II) provides main road access to much of this land, while the Kuantan-Sungei Lembing road also provides useful access to other areas having a promising potential. These two roads provide access to at least four areas of State land in which agricultural development could be initiated without any delay occasioned by the need for major road construction works, or by the possibility of conflict with other resource-use interests and the following areas appear eminently suitable for such development.

(1) Former Bukit Goh Forest Reserve

Situated a few miles to the northwest of Kuantan, this area, which contains particularly rich Chengal forest, was soil surveyed several years ago, and found to contain a high proportion of good soils which were considered suitable for diversification agriculture, and later the reserve was de-gazetted and a small crop testing station was set up by the Department of Agriculture on a representative soil type near the centre of the former reserve. An observational block of oil palm was planted on this small agricultural station, and the subsequent growth of this block has been entirely satisfactory, so that the Agricultural Department is now able to recommend the areas of better

soil in this former reserve for extensive cultivation with oil palm. Parts of the area have in recent years been opened up to forest exploitation, and these blocks are now well suited for immediate alienation and cultivation with crops other than rubber.

The area is bounded on the southwest side by the Sungei Lembing road and on the east by a number of estates which have a good connecting road system. Forest reserves occur on the north and southeast. Forest extraction routes already extended from the existing roads into the area and with minor improvements these forest tracks could most probably be utilised for agricultural development purposes. Eventually a through road running across the centres of the area of high quality soil, and joining the Sungei Lembing road near the eighth mile with the estate road system on the east near the Jabor valley and the Jeram Kuantan Estate boundary, would appear to be a logical development which could lead to settlement and agricultural development over some 10,000 acres.

(2) An area between the Sungei Lembing Road and Route II

There is a large 18,000 acre area of State land between the Gambang-Kuantan road (Route II) and the Sungei Lembing-Kuantan road, and lying to the east of the eastern boundary of the Berkelah Forest Reserve which contains soils having a high potential for agricultural development. Soil survey data indicates that these soils are likely to be well suited to oil palm cultivation. Initial development could be commenced from the Sungei Lembing road, while a suitable access route for the entire area could be constructed later to join the Gambang-Kuantan road from about the thirteenth mile (in the region of Gambang Estate, about a mile to the east of Bukit Sulai) with the Sungei Lembing road near Tong Ah or Kuran Estates, and aligned to run through the centre of the fertile soil area.

In drawing up detailed development plans for this area consideration should be given to the possibility of establishing a firm alienation limit for agricultural development on the west side of the area, where the terrain is steep and mountainous, and this could be conveniently realised by establishing an extension to the Berkelah Forest Reserve. The eastern boundary of the extension could conveniently be run from Sungei Charu, about one mile upstream from Nada Estate, across the Sungei Panching, to the present northeast corner of the Berkelah Reserve. The eastern alienation limit should coincide with the boundary of the poorer soils which mark the edge of the notorious Paya Besar area swamp.

(3) Sungei Pohoi

The land capability map for Kuantan district shows an area of good soil immediately south of the main Kuantan-Maran road between the third and tenth milestones west of Gambang. The western part of this area is gazetted as a Malay reserve while the eastern and southern portions are classified as State land. The area is bounded on the east, south and southwest by the Lepar Forest Reserve, which is also the Pekan district boundary. The area is dissected by the Sungei Pohoi.

Access from the main road into the area would present few problems, but unfortunately, this area does not contain soils of such a high quality rating as the previous two areas and preliminary soil survey data indicates that rubber would be a safer crop throughout most of this area than alternatives such as oil palm. The topography is also rather steeper and more broken, particularly in the northern part of the Malay reserve, while the percentage of swamp is higher, and this could increase the difficulties of the developer. About 8,000 acres of available land are believed to occur in this area.

(4) Sungei Lepar Valley

The occurrence of soils of above average quality in the Sungei Lepar Valley has been noted by staff of the Agriculture Department, who have undertaken soil surveys in this areas in recent years. (A report entitled 'Schematic-Reconnaissance Soil Survey of the Lepar Valley in the northeast Pahang' by Mr. D. Libby published in 1964, describes and gives details of the soil distribution pattern). The area of good soil extends in a northwesterly direction up the valley and continues into Jerantut district further to the northwest. It is conservatively estimated that at least 80,000 acres of this soil, presently covered by forest, and suitable for agricultural development occur in this area.

Access into the valley is difficult but this should not preclude initial development from the southern end. No vehicular tracks penetrate for any distance northwards from the main road (Route II), with the single exception of a jeep track, about ten miles long, which leads to a small prospecting camp near the foot of the limestone cliffs situated near the southwestern entrance to the valley. The southern part of this track runs through Pekan district territory, and may afford satisfactory access for initial agricultural development in the extreme southwestern end of the valley, which lies partly in Pekan district and mostly in Kuantan district, but a more permanent access route might profitably be constructed from the vicinity of Kampong Paya Bungor, and leading up the valley a mile or two in from the western bank of the Sungei Lepar.

This road might eventually be extended to join with the Jerantut-Maran road in the vicinity of the Sungei Tekam Forest Reserve, on the northern side of the Jengka triangle development area. Such a road would be over forty miles long, but is not immediately necessary and only a few miles would need to be completed in the first instance to provide access to some 10-15,000 acres of land suitable for diversification agriculture, which appears from the soil survey records to be suitable for oil palm. Further extensions to the road could be made during the subsequent Five-Year Plan periods, leading to an eventual link-up with the Jengka Triangle road system in perhaps 20 to 25 years time.

Detailed development planning should take into account the need to realign the forest reserve boundaries on the east and west side of the valley in order to permit alienation for agriculture up to the edge of the steep land boundary, which is shown on the existing soil maps, and the area above the steep land boundary should be gazetted as forest reserve, if not already included in this category, in order to make the best possible use of the natural resources and to prevent inadvertent alienation for other purposes in the future.

Consideration should also be given to the need to conserve as forest the smaller outcrops of steep land, unsuitable for agricultural development, on the south side of the area.

Special consideration should be given to the question of permissible use in the area of broken country on the east side of the Sungei Lepar downstream of the unnamed left bank tributary with kuala position 30/4.065733, and extending as far as the kuala of the Sungei Jerangkang. This area contains several steep hills which are of questionable suitability for agricultural development, and a number of ribbon lakes which have resulted from erosion in the hills to the east, and which would increase the difficulties of any developer. This area, which contains productive forest, might be better gazetted as forest reserve for conservation reasons and included as an extension to the Bukit Berkoloh Forest Reserve, in view of the marginal factors mentioned above, and the probable expense of providing satisfactory road access for agricultural development.

Bentong district

A large part of the western side of this district consists of steep mountainous country forming part of the Main Range, in which topographical conditions are generally unsuitable for agricultural settlement and development while in the less steeply sloping parts of the district, which occur mainly towards the eastern side and the south-east corner, considerable areas are occupied by gazetted forest reserve and for that reason are not immediately available for agricultural development even though the soil and other conditions may be deemed suitable.

(5) Sungei Chemomoi.

Considerable settlement has already occurred in this district, particularly along the valleys of the Sungei Bentong, and the Sungei Telemong, where alienated land occurs almost continuously along the roads which traverse these valleys. In consequence, the only large area of land which is suitable and likely to be available for development lies in the extreme southeastern corner of the district, to the east of the Karak-Manchis main road. In this area the soils are generally of average quality and suitable mainly for rubber cultivation, but the largest area of State land in this region is unfortunately not directly accessible by existing roads as far as is known, and a short access road would be required before settlement could commence. This land occurs to the east of Bukit Batu Berguling, immediately south of the Kemasul Forest Reserve boundary, and the site could be reached by means of a short access road, about three miles in length, which might be constructed from the 107th mile on the Manchis-Durian Tipus road, and which might conveniently run in a northeasterly direction around the southeast ridge of Bukit Sarum and into the valley of the Sungei Chemomoi. About 10,000 acres of agriculturally suitable land occurs in this area, and this appears to be the only area of State land sufficiently large for an FLDA type scheme (5,000 acres minimum size) in the district. This area is bounded on the west by the steep slopes of Bukit Batu Berguling, which will be better suited to permanent productive forest reservation under a sound land use policy, while towards the east there is an area of rather steeply sloping, broken country intersected by swamps. The steeper areas are unsuitable for agricultural development and should be excluded from any proposed settlement scheme, while the swamps are unlikely to prove suitable for agricultural development unless a comprehensive drainage system is provided. Detailed site examination of these areas would be advisable before the final alienation boundary for agricultural settlement is drawn up.

The only other areas of State land suitable and available for agricultural development are small patches, usually less than 500 acres in extent, which occur close to the main roads, and particularly along the Karak-Manchis road. The location of these areas can be determined from a close study of the 1 inch to a mile land capability classification and land alienation and gazettelement maps for the district.

Temerloh District

There are tremendous reserves of good soil, suitable for agriculture, including several large areas well suited to diversification cropping, within the boundaries of this district. While much of this land is already alienated and developed for agriculture, or is earmarked for future FLDA development, and other areas of agriculturally suitable land are contained within the boundaries of gazetted forest or game reserves, there are still considerable opportunities for immediate agricultural development on State land in close proximity to the existing road routes, where the development could be carried out without serious conflict with other land use interest.

A comparison between the land capability map and the land alienation and gazettelement map for this district suggests the following areas, each of which exceeds 5,000 acres in extent, which might be suitable for FLDA type settlement schemes:-

(6) Sungei Semantan (North)

This area is taken to be the land lying to the north of the Sungei Semantan between Mentakab and Kuala Sungei Jenalik, and which is bounded on the north by Krau Game Reserve, on the northeast and east by the Kerdu Forest Reserve and on the west by the Lakum Forest Reserve. The western side of this area comprises part of the Semantan Malay Reserve, in which there are approximately 9,000 acres of unalienated land which fall into the agriculturally suitable group, including 6,000 acres of soils suitable for oil palm, while the eastern side of the area consists largely of State land, about 11,000 acres in extent, which is also suitable for agricultural development.

Access into the western side of this area is possible via the road leading to the existing Malay settlements (Kampong Bolok) which are mainly concentrated near the centre of the reserve, while access into the eastern side is possible from Sungei Semantan Estate. The soils over most of this area are known to be suitable principally for rubber cultivation, and a more detailed examination of the terrain would be necessary before a firm decision could be made with regard to the suitability of the area for oil palm cultivation.

(7) Jenderak

An area of State land exceeding 17,000 acres in extent occurs between the eastern boundary of the Krau Game Reserve and the fringe of alienated land bordering the west bank of the Sungei Pahang south of Kuala Krau. The Jerantut-Mentakab railway and the recently completed Kuala Krau-Temerloh road both come within a mile of the eastern side of this area, and access into the area could be made with little difficulty from these routes.

The soils in this area are principally suitable for rubber, and a detailed examination of the terrain would be necessary before a firm decision could be made with regard to the suitability of the area for oil palm cultivation.

(8) Sungei Belengu Area

About four miles southwest of Temerloh, lying to the east and north of the Mentakab-Gemas railway line, there are approximately 6,000 acres of State land suitable for agriculture development which are surrounded on the north, east, and southeast by alienated land.

Soil survey data for this area indicates that rubber would be the most suitable crop, and the area does not have a high potential for alternative crops such as oil palm. Access into the area could conveniently be made via one or other of the side roads which run into the surrounding alienated land from the Temerloh-Triang road, a mile or two to the east of the eastern perimeter of the area.

(9) Sungei Pahang Loop

The Sungei Pahang Loop is that area of land to the south of the western end of the Temerloh-Meran new highway and south of the Jengka Triangle development area, which is bounded by the Sungei Pahang on the west, south and east. Within this area there are some 20,000 acres of unalienated land lying within either the Bukit Segumpal or the Senyum Jempul Malay Reserve, which are suitable for agricultural development, either with rubber on the undulating areas, or possibly

with padi in several valley swamps totalling possibly 2,000 acres. It is also possible that some parts of this area will prove suitable for oil palm cultivation on closer soil examination. This area is easily accessible from the surrounding areas of alienated land which fringe the Sungei Pahang, or from the old Kampong Chenor road which forms the northern boundary to the block.

(10) Bukit Mendi

This area includes approximately 25,000 acres of agriculturally suitable State land, in which most of the soils are considered suitable for oil palm cultivation, while the remainder are suitable for rubber, with the exception of one or two small areas of strongly sloping land, including the slopes of Bukit Mendi. The area occupies part of the southwest corner of the district, between the Temerloh-Bentong district boundary and the fringe of alienated land which borders the railway and the road between Triang and Kemayan.

Access into this area could be conveniently made by means of a short (one or two miles) track constructed from the existing Triang-Kemayan road.

(11) Kuala Triang

On the south bank of the Sungei Pahang, on the opposite side of the river from the Sungei Pahang Loop, and east and south of the kuala of the Sungei Triang extending as far east as the lower course of the Sungei Bera, there is a considerable area of unalienated Malay Reserve, approximately 7,000 acres in extent, which is suitable for agricultural development particularly with rubber, while on the south side of the Malay Reserve boundary there is a further area of State land, about 5,000 acres in extent, which is equally suitable for agricultural development with rubber. Access into both parts of this area could be made via one to two mile access routes, constructed from the existing Kampong Mengkarak-Kuala Bera road.

(12) Bukit Bertanga

There are approximately 60,000 acres of undeveloped agriculturally suitable land, of which about 75% is State land and 25% Malay Reserve, lying in the area bounded by the lower course of the Sungei Bera on the west; the Sungei Pahang on the north; and the mountainous country of the Bukit Bertanga ridge and the Kampong Chini mountain mass on the east, and extending south as far as the latitude of Bukit Bertanga, in which the soils are for the most part known to be suitable for oil palm development, and in parts of which agricultural settlement might be commenced at an early date. Such development would most conveniently be carried out at the northern side of the block, via short access tracks only a mile or two long, which could be constructed from the recently completed extension of the riverine road which runs northeast along the south bank of the Sungei Pahang between Kampong Kuala Bera and Kampong Tolok.

(13) Bukit Senorang

Towards the southwestern corner of the district, between the Triang-Kemayan road and the middle course of the Sungei Serting, and lying east of Bukit Senorang, there are some 20,000 acres of State land, on undulating to rolling topography, in which the soils are suitable for agricultural development particularly with rubber. This area is already accessible by means of a recently constructed forest track which runs through the northern part of the area.

Although this area is one of the most accessible of any large area of undeveloped state land in Temerloh district, a word of caution is necessary, as it is also the area which is classed as least suitable for rubber of all the areas mentioned above. For this reason it is suggested that this area should be given a low priority for development in relation to the other areas mentioned above.

The eight areas selected from the land capability classification data for this district represents those areas of agriculturally suitable State land or Malay Reserve which are reasonably accessible at the present day, and which are sufficiently large for FIDA or similar scale development projects. In addition there is a very large area of agriculturally suitable land, much of which is suitable for oil palm or other diversification crops, which occupies the southeastern corner of this district, mainly to the east of Tasek Bera, and adjoining Pekan district, Segamat District in Johore, and Kuala Pilah district in Negri Sembilan. Within this large area of undeveloped country there is an opportunity for very large scale development, possible of the Jengka Triangle type. This development would be very long term and would require very careful master planning supported by more detailed and time-consuming resource surveys of minerals, soils, forest, and water. Other areas eminently suitable for agricultural development are known to occur in certain large areas of reserve land including the Kemasul Forest Reserve, the Lakum Forest Reserve, the Krau Forest Reserve and the Krau Game Reserve, but agricultural development of these areas, while possibly expedient in the future, may not be acceptable at the present time.

Pekan District

The agricultural development potentials of Pekan district are very great, but owing to the lack of road access over most of the areas of greatest potential, development in most areas cannot be undertaken immediately and large scale development in the most promising areas must be preceded by a programme of major road construction within the district. The most well roaded and highly populated area in the district is the coastal strip, but agricultural potentials in this areas are extremely limited, and agricultural settlement is confined mainly to the better soil around the river mouths, and also the poor sandy soils which fringe the coast between the kualas. Extremely poorly drained peat swamps, varying between 5 and 20 miles in width, and unsuitable for agricultural development, separate the already settled coastal strip from the better agricultural soils which occur on undulating and gently sloping terrain further inland. Towards the western and southern borders of the district there are large mountain masses in which the agricultural potential is negligible, and the main areas suitable for agricultural settlement occur in the northwest, centre and southwest.

(14) Sungei Luit Valley

This area lies in the extreme northwest of the district, to the north of the 15 miles section of the Maran-Kuantan road (Route II) which runs through this corner of the district. The area of State land suitable for agricultural development lies within the catchment of the Sungei Luit, to the west and northwest of the Kampong New Zealand FIDA Scheme. The area is accessible by means of a track which runs along the west side of the Sungei Luit and which gives access to a mining area about 6 miles north of the main road. With improvements this road could be utilised as the access route to an FIDA type development scheme involving perhaps 5,000 acres.

The Sungei Luit valley also has some mining potential, and for this reason the boundary of any agricultural settlement scheme

should be carefully aligned to avoid those areas where a mining potential is known to exist.

(15) Kampong Mentiga

This area consists of undulating to rolling country which is suitable for large scale agricultural development, except in those areas which are intersected by numerous swamps. The areas has recently been made accessible through the construction of the Sungei Pahang south bank road between Pekan and Kampong Mentiga and its westward continuation to a recently opened iron mine near Tasek Chini. The Kampong Mentiga-Tasek Chini section of this new road traverses State land suitable for development with rubber, but the suitability of the soils in this area for oil palm is uncertain, and more detailed soil examination, together with a detailed consideration of other factors, including processing, and palm oil bulking and transport facilities, would be advisable before any firm plans are drawn up for this crop.

About 20,000 acres of agriculturally suitable land lies in close proximity to the existing roads which have been recently constructed for mineral and timber extractive purposes.

(16) Bukit Ibam

The western section of the recently constructed railway between Bukit Ibam and Rompin, in the south-central section of the district, runs through some 25 miles of undulating to rolling terrain, which is suitable for oil palm in one or two places. Most of the area comprises forest reserve but the last five miles of the route runs through State land. Unfortunately road access is not available to this area, while it is doubtful whether the railway line could be used for providing access to settlements which might be established along this route, but the possibility of establishing an agricultural settlement in the neighbourhood of the railhead at Bukit Ibam, with short access roads running from Bukit Ibam, with short access roads running from Bukit Ibam to the settlement site, might be worth investigating, and in fact a private road already exists in this area, running through agriculturally suitable land, about 19,000 acres in extent, between Bukit Ibam and Kampong Kuala Kur.

The information concerning agricultural development opportunities for the preceding four districts is more detailed and precise than is possible for the remaining districts in Malaya, which are discussed below, because these four districts are the only districts for which land capability classification maps and reports are available. When such reports become available for the remaining districts, similar more precise recommendations for both immediate and long term natural resource development will be possible.

A brief summary of the possibilities for immediate agricultural development in these remaining districts is given below.

Raub District

In many respects Raub district is similar to Bentong District, in that much of the western side of the district consists of steep and very steep mountainous terrain in which there is a limited potential for agricultural development. Settlement in the past has taken place mainly in the valleys immediately east of the main range foothills, and in recent years there has been a movement of settlers into neighbouring areas of hilly terrain which are of questionable suitability for agriculture owing to the nature of the topography and soil. On the other hand, areas which would be better suited to agricultural development are either inaccessible by road or are gazetted as forest reserves.

Because of these limitations there are no obvious areas in which large scale agricultural development might be immediately commenced, with the possible exception of a few thousand acres in the area covered

by the Raub Australian Gold Mine Lease, which it is understood is likely to be revised and in consequence reduced in area in the near future.

Cameron Highlands district

There are no obvious areas suitable for large scale agricultural development in this district.

Lipis district

The western, northern and eastern sides of this district are occupied by mountainous terrain with little or no agricultural development potentials, while the centre-south and southeast consists of rolling to hilly terrain in which agricultural development opportunities over the long term are quite considerable. Settlement to date has been confined largely to the banks of the Sungei Jelai and its larger tributaries, and to those areas accessible by the only main road within the district, which runs between Benta and Kuala Lipis. Lack of road access into most areas of potential agricultural land has hindered development in the past, but this situation is rapidly changing as a result of the latest rural road programme. At the present time however available records suggest that there are only two areas which can be classed as available and suitable for such immediate settlement.

(17) Sungei Koyan

The road which runs from Raub through the Tersang Forest Reserve towards the southwestern corner of the district is due to reach the 29 milestone from Raub, close to the Sungei Koyan, by the end 1966, and the last two miles of this road run through State land on the northern side of the Tersang Forest Reserve boundary. This road gives access to approximately 10,000 acres of rolling to hilly land, suitable for agricultural development, within the catchment of the Sungei Koyan, and bounded on the east and west by hilly to mountainous topography. Similar conditions exist further to the north and continue as far as Kampong Medan and this northerly extension could also be made accessible if the existing road was extended for a few miles further north of the 24th milestone.

(18) Kampong Dusun

The new road which runs from Padang Tungku over the Sungei Jelai and then through Selbourne Estate to Kampong Pagar Sasak on the west bank of the Sungei Tekai runs through an area of State land, to the north of Selbourne Estate and the Kechau Forest Reserve and to the west of the Sungei Tekai, and bounded on the northwest by steep mountainous terrain, in which there are perhaps 8,000 acres of agriculturally suitable land within close proximity to the new road route.

Jerantut District

Most of this district consists of steep and very steep mountainous terrain which is unsuitable for large scale agricultural development, and the only extensive region having an agricultural development potential is towards the southwest corner. The Benta-Jerantut-Moran road and the recently completed Jerantut-Kuala Krau road give access to parts of this area, including the northern end of the Jengka Triangle, in which development master planning is currently being carried out. One or two other areas which might be suitable for agricultural development are not available because they occur within gazetted forest reserves, including the Tekam Forest Reserve and the Som Forest Reserve, and the only obvious opportunities for immediate large scale agricultural development appear to be the following:

(19) Jeransang

The Jerantut-Kuala Krau road runs through an area of undulating to rolling terrain, much of which is Malay Reserve and part of which is State land, in the area to the east and north of Kampong Jeransang. There are possibly 8,000 acres of available land, likely to prove suitable for agricultural development within this area, which is bounded by the Jerantut-Jerantut ferry road on the north, the Sungei Kiol on the south, and sections of the Jerantut-Mentakab railway and the Sungei Pahang on the west and east respectively. Similar conditions exist over about 5,000 acres on the south side of the Sungei Kiol, and continue over the boundary with Temerloh district.

(20) Sungei Beletil

A few miles to the north of Jerantut ferry, and lying between the Sungei Pahang and the Bukit Buloh ridge, are some 14,000 acres of State land in which soil and topographical conditions are probably suitable for agricultural development. Road access into this area already exists, in the form of a timber extraction route, which runs along the eastern side of the block, and this track would probably make a convenient development route if improved.

JOHORE

The pattern of land alienation in Johore shows that settlement is concentrated principally on the western and southern sides of the State, while most of the centre-east and north portions consist either of State land or gazetted forest or game reserves. Most of the roads are similarly concentrated in the west and south and only two main roads traverse the large areas of gazetted reserves and State land on the north and east, where the greatest agricultural potentials are known to occur. These roads are the Kluang-Jemaluang road and the Endau-Mersing-Kota Tinggi-Johore Bharu road, which were both constructed prior to the Second World War. Both these roads traverse forest or game reserves for much of their distance and for this reason they offer limited opportunities for immediate settlement and agricultural development. Shorter roads which provide access to suitable areas for agricultural development include the recently completed Kulai-Kota Tinggi road and the Kampong Sedili Besar road.

Mersing district

In spite of the fact that this district has a long term agricultural development potential of considerable magnitude, there appears to be only one area which is immediately available for such development. This is mainly due to the fact that the roads which traverse through the areas of unalienated land run mainly through forest or game reserves, while in other places these roads traverse areas of steep or swampy terrain, or areas in which the soil is of limited suitability for agricultural development. The only area which appears to be suitable and available is therefore the following:

(21) Bukit Batu Besar Area

This is the area of State land lying to the southwest of Jemaluang and bounded on the north by the Kluang-Jemaluang road and on the east by the Kota Tinggi-Jemaluang road. The south side of the area is bounded by the Endau-Kota Tinggi wildlife reserve while the western side is marked by the eastern boundary of the Mersing Forest Reserve. Included within this block are some 5,000 acres of land of fair suitability for agricultural development mainly for cultivation with rubber. The available land in this area is somewhat broken due to the presence of scattered alienation plots, and also to the presence

of some rather hilly terrain, including Bukit Batu Besar, in which the slopes are excessively steep and unsuitable for agricultural development. This area rates as rather poor in comparison with other areas in many other parts of the country which have been classed as available and suitable, but possesses the unique advantage of having first class road access along two sides.

Kota Tinggi district

The land in the southwest of this district is largely alienated while forest or game reserves extend over most of the northern sector. The only extensive areas of accessible State land to be found towards the west-centre corner of the district is in the area traversed by the recently completed Kulai-Kota Tinggi road. It is understood that 20,000 acres of land in the neighbourhood of this road has recently been alienated for private sector agricultural development but it is possible that additional State land suitable for agricultural development is still available within reasonable proximity of the new route. The land in this area is known to be well suited to agricultural development for tree crops such as rubber and oil palm.

(22) Pasak

The only remaining area of State land is in the southeast, in the region known as the Pengerang Peninsula. Recently completed soil surveys have indicated that most of the land in this area, which is mainly undulating to rolling in topography, is well suited to agricultural development. A road running through the centre of the peninsula from the main Kota Tinggi-Jemaluang road, a few miles north of Kota Tinggi, would permit access into this region, and it is understood that the first few miles of such a road has recently been constructed as far as the Pasak FIDA scheme, and this may afford access to at least a part of this area. A continuation of this road down the centre of the peninsula could lead to phased development of approximately 100,000 acres of potential agricultural land. A high proportion of this land is suitable for oil palm.

Johore Bahru district

There appear to be no opportunities for large scale agricultural settlement and development on State land in this district, which consists almost entirely of alienated land.

Pontian district

This district lies almost entirely on the flat west coast alluvial belt, in which the soils are of varying suitability for agricultural development. All the better soil in this area have been alienated, mainly for agricultural purposes and the only remaining areas of State land consist of deep peat swamps which fringe the northeastern side of the district. These areas are of very questionable suitability for agricultural development, with the possible exception of pineapple cultivation.

Batu Pahat district

This district is similar in many respects to Pontian district and consists mainly of alienated land, while the majority of the remaining areas of State land comprise swamps which often contain highly acid soils, and which are therefore of very questionable suitability for large scale agricultural development, and which present considerable drainage and soil amelioration problems.

Muar district

Muar district is similar to Batu Pahat and Pontian districts in that most of the land is alienated, while the few areas which might be suitable for large scale agricultural development are reserved as forest and therefore cannot be considered as immediately available, or are swampy areas of State land containing soils unsuitable in their present condition for large scale agricultural development, and requiring extensive drainage and other amelioration measures before they can be made suitable.

Kluang district

Kluang district includes large areas of forest reserve, parts of which contain soil suitable for agricultural development, and which may present opportunities in the future, while much of the remaining area is already alienated and developed for agriculture, as far as is known, and for this reason no immediate development opportunities are apparent.

Segamat district

Segamat district contains a considerable area of alienated land, particularly along the southwestern side, while most of the remaining areas are gazetted either as forest or game reserves, and the few remaining areas of State appear to be either inaccessible or contain unsuitable soil conditions. For these reason there appear to be no areas suitable for immediate large scale agricultural development.

MALACCA

With the exception of one or two small forest reserves, almost the entire area of Malacca consists of alienated land, and there are no obvious opportunities for immediate large scale agricultural settlement and development.

NEGRI SEMBILAN.

With the exception of a few small areas of forest reserve, almost all the areas of land suitable for agricultural development in the four districts of Negri Sembilan which lie west of the Main Range consist of alienated land, and there are no obvious opportunities for immediate large scale agricultural development in these areas. Jelebu district, which consists mainly of steep land best suited to forest reservation for conservation reasons and which lies to the east of the Main range, is similar in this respect.

Kuala Pilah district

The western side of Kuala Pilah district consists mainly of steeply sloping mountainous terrain in which large scale agricultural development opportunities are not apparent, while the intervening valleys in this area are already largely alienated and developed. On the eastern and northeastern sides of the district there are large areas of gazetted forest reserve together with smaller areas of State land in both of which large scale agricultural development opportunities undoubtedly exist. In view of the fact that most of this land is reserved forest, the only areas in which immediate agricultural opportunities are apparent include the following.

(23) Sungei Merlimau

This area of State land lies to the south of the Pasoh Forest Reserve and to the northeast of Jeram Padang North Forest Reserve, to the east of Kampong Serting Ulu, and is traversed towards the northern side by the Kampong Ulu Serting-byer Itam road. The Bahau-Triang section

of the east coast railway runs along the east side of the area. The soil in this area is for the most part of only average quality but the terrain over much of the area is undulating to rolling and topographically suitable for large scale agricultural settlement. A careful field examination may reveal as much as 5,000 acres of land in this area which might be suitable for rubber cultivation, although it should be noted that in general the quality of the soils in this area is inferior to that known to occur in most of the other areas discussed in this report.

(24) Sungei Serting.

To the east of the railway line between Ayer Hitam and Sungei Lui and to the north of Ladang Geddes Estate, and extending eastwards to the Pahang border and the western edge of the Palong Forest Reserve, there are some 60,000 acres of State land, with undulating to rolling terrain, in which the soils are of average quality and suitable in places for large scale agricultural development, mainly for rubber. Access into this areas is possible via the existing road system within the neighbouring Ladang Geddes Estate, while in recent years a number of timber extraction tracks have penetrated into various parts of this region.

SELANGOR

Practically all areas of soil suitable for agricultural development within the state of Selangor have been alienated and developed for agriculture, or for residential or industrial purposes, and the choice of suitable land for large scale agricultural settlement and development is extremely limited. Such land is mainly to be found within those forest reserves which occur in the centre of the district, forming a discontinuous belt running in a north-south direction through the State. Many of these reserves also include large areas of steep hilly terrain which are unsuitable for agricultural development, while the mountains which occupy the eastern side of the state are equally unsuitable for such purposes., and there are strong conservation reasons for reserving these steeper areas either as permanent productive or protective forest reserve, and whenever possible utilizing such areas for other purposes including game and recreation purposes. These areas also constitute important water catchments which need protecting in order to ensure the continuation of adequate potable and industrial water supplies. The only large area of State land is to be found in northeast Selangor but as this area is occupied mainly by extensive swamps containing deep peat soils which are unsuitable for agricultural development, with the possible exception of pineapples if adequate drainage is effected, the agricultural development opportunities in this area are negligible. The only areas in which opportunities for immediate large scale agricultural development are apparent are as follows:

Ulu Selangor district

(25) Bukit Tungal

To the west of Bukit Tungal and northwest of Nigel Gardiner Estate, to the north of Berjantai in northwest Selangor, and lying within the former area of the Malayan Collieries timber concession area there are small pockets of land, undulating to rolling in topography, in which agricultural development opportunities occur, and which are accessible by old timber extraction tracks which run into the area from the adjoining Nigel Gardiner Estate. With careful selection it may be possible to select 5,000 acres of land suitable for an FLDA type settlement scheme.

Sabak Bernam

(26) Sungei Bernam

In the northwest part of the State, near the Perak border, there is a strip of alluvial soils distributed along the south bank of the Sungei Bernam. These soils seldom extend for distances of more than 1 mile south of the river bank, but there are several thousand acres of State land, extending from Kampong Sungei Panjang to as far upstream as Kuala Sungei Dusun in which agricultural opportunities occur. These soils, which are suitable for oil palm cultivation, could be developed via access from the Sungei Panjang end.

PERAK

Practically all area of agriculturally suitable land in Perak are already alienated for agricultural purposes, or for mining, residential or industrial development, and the only large areas of agriculturally suitable land occur within the lowland forest reserves, as far as is known. The remaining areas of State land consist almost entirely of swamp, usually containing deep peats, and there are no obvious opportunities for immediate large scale agricultural development. The only possible exception to this is in the southeast part of the Trans-Perak region, in which extensive drainage and/or irrigation works are currently being carried out with a view to developing this land either for padi or for dry land cropping. Such development is long term rather than short term.

PENANG/PROVINCE WELLESLEY

Almost the entire area of this State is alienated, and largely developed for agricultural purposes, while the existing forest reserves play an important conservation role and are not suitable for large scale agricultural development.

KEDAH

Practically the entire western and central parts of Kedah State are intensively developed for agricultural purposes and the only areas in which agricultural development opportunities may occur are in one or two areas of relatively inaccessible State land in the eastern part of the State, including the Sungei Mong Jagah Valley, and within forest reserves particularly in the north and south. The only area in which large any immediate agricultural development opportunity may occur in the following:-

Padang Terap district.

(27) Kuala Nerang - Bukit Tok Janggut

The road leading from Kuala Nerang to Bukit Tok Janggut runs through sparsely developed country, in which small pockets of padi and rubber are interspaced with areas of belukar and disturbed forest. In spite of the somewhat complex pattern of alienation or illegal cultivation which occurs in this area, it might be possible to select a reasonably continuous block of approximately 5,000 acres in which a large scale settlement scheme of FIDA type could be sited.

PERLIS

Most of the agriculturally suitable land in Perlis is already alienated, and the remaining areas of land possibly suitable for agricultural development are likely to occur in the forest reserves on the north and east of the district. No opportunities are apparent for immediate large scale agricultural development.

Within the State of Kelantan it is known that some 75% of the total land area is unsuitable for agricultural development owing chiefly to the steeply sloping and mountainous nature of the terrain. The remaining 25% of the State lies mainly within the lower basin of the Sungei Kelantan and the adjacent coastal belt. This area is almost entirely alienated and developed for agriculture, particularly with paid and rubber. Of the remaining areas of agriculturally suitable land, the largest portion lies in the interior of the State, towards the Pahang border in the basin of the Sungei Lobir and Sungei Aring. This area is not accessible by road or rail and for that reason cannot be considered as immediately available for agriculture development even though the bulk of this area is believed to consist of State land.

Forest reserves occupy much of the remaining small areas of agriculturally suitable land, and the only extensive area which can therefore be selected from available records as immediately available and suitable for large scale agricultural development is the following:

Ulu Kelantan(28) Kuala Balah

On the eastern side of the Sungei Pergau, about 12 miles southeast of Kampong Jeli, and on the opposite side of the river from the recently constructed Kampong Jeli-Dabong Road. There is an area of about 10,000 acres of State land, mostly steeply sloping low hill terrain, which can be classed as marginal suitable for large scale agricultural development, mainly for rubber, but possibly suitable also for oil palm. Access into this area could be made from the west bank road, via a river crossing and a short access road a mile or two up the valley of the Sungei Kotil.

TRENGGANU

A major portion of Trengganu State is known to be too steeply sloping and mountainous for extensive agriculture development, while most of the land adjacent to the existing access roads is already alienated or comprises forest reserves or contains poor quality soils, including extremely infertile sands and highly acid and organic swamp soil, so that the only areas which can be classed as immediately available and suitable for extensive agriculture development, as far as can be judged, are the following areas:

Kuala Trengganu district(29) Ulu Chalok.

The main Kuala Trengganu-Kota Bharu road between the 21st and 33rd milestone from Kuala Trengganu runs through an area of high quality soil, well suited for agricultural development with oil palm and possibly other diversification crops as well as rubber. There are known to be at least 10,000 acres of such land under forest, within two or three miles of the main road in this area which might prove suitable for an FLDA type development schemes, although some of this land is understood to be currently under consideration for a major development scheme sponsored by the State government

Kemaman district.(30) Sungei Tobak.

An area of good quality soil is known to occur to the north of the Kampong Ayer Puteh-Kemaman Road between the 16th and 19th milestone, and continuing northwards along the west bank of the Sungei Tobak for several miles. There are at least 10,000 acres of such land under reasonable proximity of the road, which might be suitable for a large scale agricultural settlement scheme probably with oil palm as the main crop.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This report details a number of areas which on the basis of available evidence appear best suited for immediate large scale agricultural development. The areas have been located from a study of maps and records currently on file in the Land Capability Classification Section of the Economic Planning Unit and other Federal Government Departments. It is appreciated that these records are not infallible, and that State plans may already exist for developing certain of these areas, while other areas which present equally good development opportunities may have been overlooked. Nevertheless it is felt that the areas described above will represent the bulk of the State land areas within the States of Malaya which could be utilised at relative short notice for large scale agricultural development.

A more complete appraisal of the agricultural and other national resource development opportunities, which will indicate the longer term as well as the short term or immediate opportunities for development, will be possible when a systematic land capability classification cover is available for the entire area of the States of Malaya, scheduled for mid 1969. Pending the production of these classification reports it is concluded that large scale agricultural development and settlement could most expediently be sited in the above areas during the immediate future.

Bahagian Perancang Ekonomi,
Jabatan Perdana Menteri,
Kuala Lumpur.

9hb Jun, 1966.

SKETCH SHOWING LOCATION OF LAND SUITABLE FOR IMMEDIATE SETTLEMENT AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT MAY 1966

SCALE 24 MILES TO AN INCH

MILES 10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50 MILES



