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Call for new approach to agriculture

THE country's agenda to develop the agricultural sector requires a paradigm shift from all levels involving participation not only from farmers but also institutions and professionals, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He said engineers are needed to create innovative equipment and machinery suitable for the country's climate and local landscape; financial institutions and banks should come out with facilities to provide capital for the growth of agricultural sector and marketing bodies should prepare suitable infrastructure.

"Likewise, scientists, chemists, communication analysts and other professionals should move in an integrated manner.

"I hope the agricultural sector which has been an integral part of the Malay world will be led by the Malays in the rural area by being at the frontline," he said when delivering the Second Universiti Malaya Alumni Premier Lecture in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Abdullah's lecture, themed "Excellence Among the Best: The Malaysia That We Desire", was held in conjunction with Universiti Malaya's 50th anniversary yesterday.

He noted that Malaysia has reached a complete economic cycle; from an agriculture-based nation, the country became a commodity exporter and moved on to manufacturing and services.

Now, the country's economic growth is accelerated by the multimedia and information technology.

Realising the high food import, he said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had announced that the agricultural sector will be given emphasis with a dynamic approach to create modern entrepreneurs and agricultural technocrats.

The modern farming community will be equipped with knowledge and skill while the sector will be developed efficiently, productively and in a more competitive manner.

"The emphasis on the agricultural sector means the rural economy in which the majority are Bumiputeras will be developed in a grand way.

"All these remind us of the brave and sound ideas voiced out, either through writings or speeches, by Royal Professor Ungku Abdul Aziz, the late Dr Ungku Omar, Amminuddin Baki and Zaaba since the early 60s when they talked about the rural economy," he said.

Abdullah also said that it is time for local scholars to formulate new political theories based on indigenous moulds and modules.

He said the country's stability and economic success achieved so far through the locally-developed governance system can be a model to other developing countries and be tested against existing political theories.

"It is obvious that the adoption of any ideology for a ruling system should be compatible with the local values and cultures," he said, urging scholars to make their students aware of attempts at colonisation.

Abdullah pointed out how other countries became victims of foreign powers who impose totally foreign political ideologies.

These countries, he said, are not only lagging in terms of development but are considering recipes for a stable government.

According to him, a country can only formulate a free foreign policy in international relations when it has fortified its internal factors.

The Deputy Prime Minister also expressed concerns about a section of the

society who are easily led by information which are not only false but slanderous in nature by those who manipulate the information channel. They accept negative stories about the Government and the country and totally reject true facts on the good deeds of the Government, he said.

"This phenomenon is against the attitude which is supposed to be portrayed by knowledgeable people.

"Thus, a genuine knowledged community should take immediate steps to contain the culture of falsifying facts and poisoning the rakyat's minds," he said.

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