

27 SEP 1999

Abdullah-agriculture

INTENSIFY R&D IN AGRICULTURE, SAYS ABDULLAH

KUALA TERENGGANU, Sept 27 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today called for Research and Development in agriculture to be intensified, with commercialisation in mind.

He said that although the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (Mardi) had carried out many researches and made new discoveries for the commercialisation of agricultural produce, there seemed to be a lack of interest among those concerned.

"It could be due to greater competition from the industrial and plantation sectors. I don't know," he told reporters after opening the 25th general meeting of the Terengganu Farmers' Organisation, here.

Abdullah, who is on a two-day visit to Terengganu, said there must be a change of attitude among the people for the development of the agricultural sector.

"We need to change the way people think, including the farmers, that the agricultural sector too could also provide substantial profits.

"People prefer to develop vast land for oil palms and eventually for housing schemes or golf courses...it's a question of choice," he said.

He said such attitude should be changed because agriculture had much more offer, for example farmers could be the suppliers of raw materials to food factories.

"If this is given due attention...God willing our agricultural sector will have bright future and more developed," he said.

Abdullah said the government would continue to provide assistance to enable the farmers to increase their productivity.

In his speech, he said the new vision of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is to develop the agricultural sector to make Malaysia as a food producer.

But he said landowners must be willing to let their land be developed for commercial agriculture as the vision also involved participation of the private sector.

Abdullah said the government would also review the education system to produce agricultural workers.

In this respect, he said the cabinet recently decided that Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) should provide more courses relating to agriculture covering management, technology and marketing aspect.

He said there would also be a review of functions of agricultural agencies to avoid duplication which would be a waste of public funds.

--BERNAMA

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