

PM: Engage in growth competition

BY LEE YUK PENG

ALOR GAJAH: The Prime Minister has called for a "friendly competition" among mentris besar and chief ministers to develop their respective states.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi added, however, that he would leave it to them to decide which sector of development they would want to focus on.

He would rather have state leaders competing with each other to excel rather than indulge in politicking, he said after opening a tropical fruit farm at Lubok Cina, near here, yesterday.

The D-Paradise Tropical Fruit World and Aboriginal Native Village in Lubok Cina here yesterday was developed by entrepreneur Lee Wah Cheong, who took five years to plan, research and develop the 68ha farm.

Citing examples of his proposal, Abdullah said there is fruit village in Selangor, a 3,000ha orchid farm in Johor and 530ha of timber farm being developed by the respective state governments.

"Even a small state can have a big vision," the Prime Minister said.

"I used to see passion fruit growing along fences but here (at Lee's farm) I see passion fruits being grown on the roof (to shade a canopy walk),' said Abdullah, commending on the idea to turn an agricultural activity into a tourism product.

After visiting the farm, he suggested to Lee, the chief executive officer of the project, to turn his place into a research centre aimed at producing quality agricultural products for the commercial market.

"One needs to think about improving all the time and there is no limit for one to improve and one should continue to strive to do better," he said, adding that one must also always be ready to accept new ideas.

"I do not mind being the campaign manager for any good venture," he quipped.

On the batik and songket industry, Abdullah said there is room for these and other handicraft to penetrate into the world market.

"There is still not enough promotion for batik and songket and the momentum has just started," he said.



IMPRESSED: Abdullah taking a closer look at the grapes grown at the farm as (centre) Mohd Ali and Lee look on.