

Abdullah: Get locals into rural industry

MARANG: Rural industries must get the local people involved, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday.

"This will make the local people happy because they will get a steady income," he added.

Commending the success of the *nipah* palm sap project in Kampung Kelulut, he said the project had created a new source of wealth for a group of enterprising villagers.

"The participants are reaping the rewards from their effort.

"They have set a fine example," Abdullah said after opening the *nipah* sap collection and processing centre in Kampung Kelulut.

The centre can process up to 100 bottles of *nipah* sap, which is sold as a drink, every 30 minutes.

Managed by the Koperasi Pekebun Nipah Marang Bhd, it encourages jobless villagers to tap the *nipah* palm for the sap which they sell at RM2 a litre to the centre. They can collect about 30 litres a day.

Twenty founding members of the co-operative, each investing RM100, and engaged in tapping the *nipah* palm, are getting about RM1,500 a month.

The amount does not include the dividend they would get from their RM100 investment in the co-operative in a year's time.

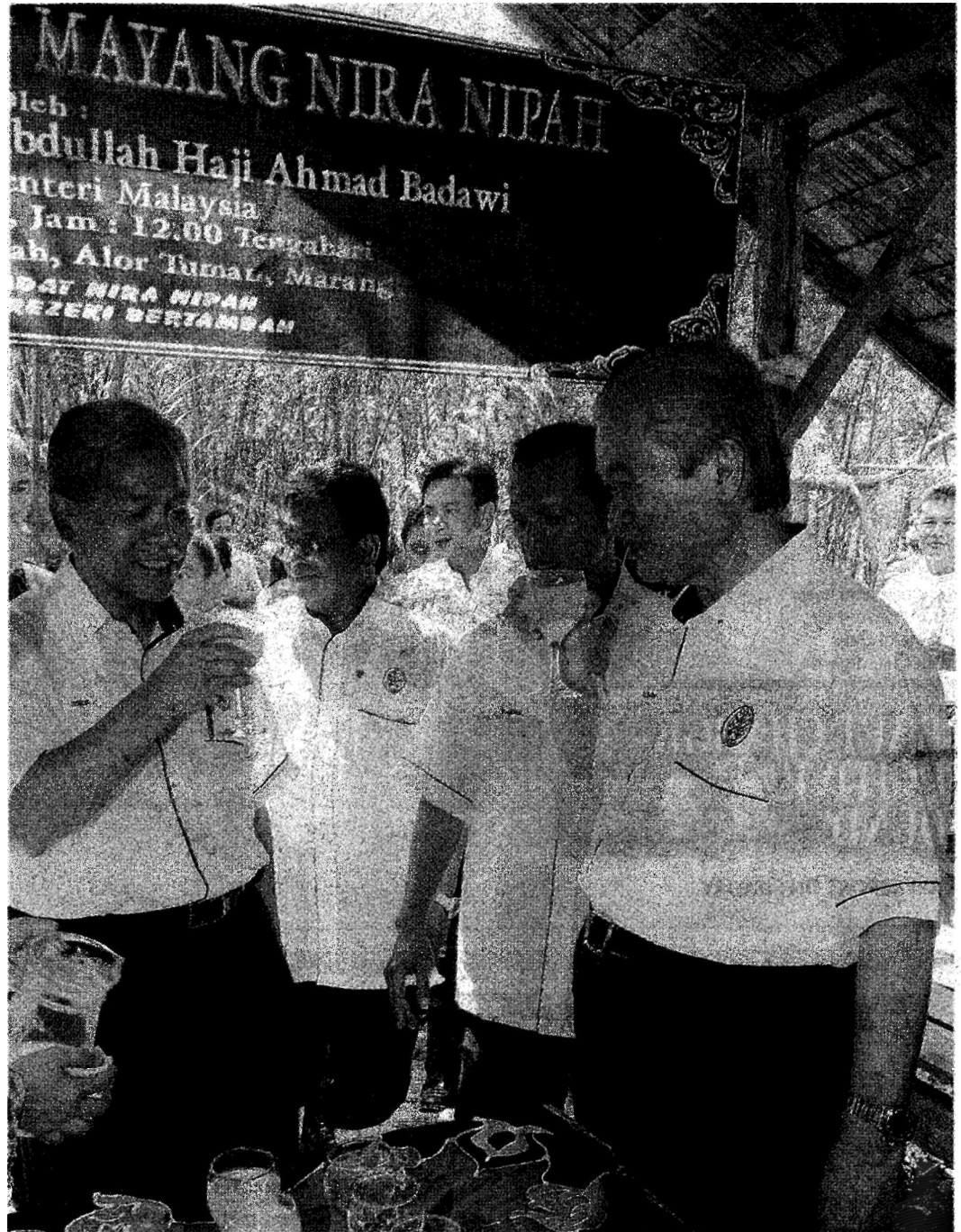
Some 130 villagers have invested between RM100 and RM1,000 in the co-operative.

"Who would have dreamed that the sap from the often neglected *nipah* palm has found a place on the shelves of supermarkets in the Middle East?" asked Abdullah.

"And who would have thought that villagers in Kelulut who participated in a *nipah* project could earn a steady income from this new found wealth?"

Abdullah had earlier tried his hand at cutting the *nipah* palm to collect its sap at a small plot near Kampung Kelulut and tasted the sweet sap.

He suggested to the co-operative and project participants to consider processing the *nipah* sap into brown sugar and to think of other uses for the *nipah* palm.



Abdullah and Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh getting a taste of the *nipah* drink at Kampung Kelulut, yesterday. — Bernama picture