

Blueprint for farming

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SIK: The Government has launched a blueprint for the development of the agro-based industry and to help improve the livelihood of those in the farming industry.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the Government had allocated RM255mil for this and hoped to attract 10,000 or more participants to the industry by 2010.

He said the blueprint was aimed at eradicating the public's perception that agriculture and agro-based industries were only associated with the poor in the farming sector.

"Participants will be involved in the value-added production, processing and marketing of agro-based products in all districts," he said when launching the National Agro-Based Industrial Entrepreneur Development Programme at Sk Bandar Baru Beris Jaya here yesterday.

"If in the past, farmers could only grow and sell their products by the roadside, now they will be taught to add value to their products," he said.

"We hope to be able to see poor farmers becoming owners of food production factories."

Speaking to reporters later, Abdullah said participants in the project would be given full support by the Government, the Agriculture and Agro-Based Industries Ministry, state governments and local banking institutions.



FRESH GREENS: Entrepreneur Idris Abdullah, who grows hydroponic vegetables, showing Abdullah his crop during an exhibition held in conjunction with the National Agriculture Entrepreneur Development Programme in Sik yesterday.

"This industry is a relatively new one. We will have to nurture participants and provide the necessary guidance, technical know-how and financial aid to those who show full commitment and dedication," he said.

Abdullah said Sik was the first district under the programme's pilot project in 2004 where 131 participants who were picked had successfully produced 40

types of agro-based products since its launch.

He said the response in Sik was so overwhelming that the ministry received applications from 6,000 participants but was only able to register 2,000 due to lack of technical support.

"The products, under the Klasik brand, have hit the shelves of local supermarkets," he added.

At a dinner organised by the state government at Wisma Darulaman, Abdullah said Malaysia would lose out in the long run if the people continued to depend on foreign technology.

He said Malaysians should create their own technology to bring progress to the country.

He said it was high time people shed the colonial mentality of holding foreign technol-

ogy in high regard.

"We must change this mindset," he added.

He called on local scientists to find innovative ways to reduce petrol consumption.

Abdullah said the Southern Corridor in Johor was poised to be the new Dubai.

"We are going to focus on high-powered commercial development in the new corridor," he said.