

# Invest in agro SMs, urges PM

**PASIR PUTEH:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has called for more local and foreign investments to boost small and medium-scale agro-industries in the country.

He said the move would result in the creation of a new generation of agro entrepreneurs.

Abdullah said the Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Ministry had planned to create more than 10,000 such entrepreneurs by 2010.

"This is a good move as it will result in more Malays being involved in the business," he said when launching the Kemubu Agriculture Development Authority's Baloh programme in Jelor here.

The programme is aimed at turning Kelantan into a regional food hub.

Speaking to newsmen later, Abdullah said the Tunas Mekar programme to develop the agriculture sector would be expanded across the country.

He said the programme was now being conducted on a trial run in Penang, Kedah and Kelantan.

Abdullah said that under the programme the young who had marketing and financial knowledge would work with

older people who had traditional farming experience.

"They can jointly set up industries which will provide jobs to those in rural areas," he said.

"Single parents can work in the industries, which will be located in the villages, instead of migrating to cities."

At another function in Bachok, Abdullah said the National Tobacco Board would provide RM86.6mil in transitional aid to 11,000 tobacco growers in Kelantan and Terengganu to switch to new crops.

He said each grower would be given RM2,500 at the end of the year, a further RM2,000 next year and RM500 in the third year.

"The aid will be given under the restructuring of the industry; many growers are affected by the drop in the price of tobacco leaves," he said.

"They can use the money to switch to other crops such as *kenaf*," he said.

Later, Abdullah paid a courtesy call on Kelantan's Sultan Ismail Petra at Istana Kubang Krian.

He also attended a dinner at the home of Kelantan Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Seri Annuar Musa in Bukit Marak last night.



**HAVE A FRUIT:** Abdullah offering a banana to Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat (left) after launching the Baloh programme in Jelor yesterday. — *Bernamapic*