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PM: Use renewable energy

Cheaper way to generate electricity for rural areas

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KUDAT: Use the forces of nature to harness alternative and renewable energy for villagers, said the Prime Minister.

Noting that sunlight, wind and water were plentiful in remote areas, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said it only made sense to use them to generate electricity for rural communities.

Launching the country's first High Impact Rural Development Programme in northern Pulau Banggi, some 300km from Kota Kinabalu yesterday, Abdullah said conventional power generation systems for rural communities were traditionally costly.

"Rural electrification is too expensive," he said, adding that generating power using solar cells and wind turbines in remote locations was viable in the face of escalating diesel and petrol prices.

He told reporters later that although Malaysia would have to import such equipment for now, the country has the capability of developing its own technology as there



First of its kind: Abdullah, his wife Datin Seri Jeanne Abdullah and Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Musa Aman (right) looking at a model of the agri-politan project site in Pulau Banggi yesterday.

were already plants producing solar cells in the country.

Abdullah said he was pleased that the RM167mil agri-politan scheme on the 440sq km island was the nation's first high impact rural development programme incorporating hybrid solar power generation.

Noting that a component of the

scheme was the setting up of 4,000ha of rubber plantations for the hardcore poor on the island, he said other agriculture-related activities should also be emphasised.

The Prime Minister said villagers should not measure development just by the number of industries

established in their localities.

"Do not look down on agriculture," said Abdullah, adding that the Banggi islanders' involvement in diverse activities including tourism and aquaculture through the scheme would serve as an example of Malaysia's innovative approach in tackling rural poverty.

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