

Big potential for tiny Perlis

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Use whatever land available to produce higher yields, says Pak Lah

KANGAR: Turn Perlis into a diamond, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He said despite being small in size, Perlis had big potential, especially to produce agriculture products.

"Being small does not mean that one does not have any value. Diamonds are small but they have great value," he said when launching the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) in Perlis at the Dewan 2020 here yesterday.

Abdullah said Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim was often worried that Perlis would be left behind in terms of economic growth because it was a small state.

"Holland is a small country, even smaller than Pahang, but it is the world's second



largest food producer," he said.

He advised the state to use whatever land it had to produce higher yields, pointing out that it should plant fruit trees that were tasty and of high quality.

He said Perlis was already growing four types of grapes that could be further expanded to producing products like grape juice, cordial and raisins.

"Our products must have high value. With the necessary technology, we can see manifold

results. Emphasis must be on research and development to improve our food quality," he said.

Abdullah said the NCER would spur major transformation in the state's rice production, especially with the opening of the RM40mil Sime Darby Bhd Seeds Research and Development Centre in Utan Aji.

He said Perlis had the potential of becoming a world-class biotechnology research and development centre, adding that its weather was conducive for seed development.

Abdullah launched a new brand name, "Benih Perlis", for high-quality seeds that would be developed at the centre.

"Benih Perlis can help reduce our imports of foreign seeds, which are presently above RM100mil a year," he said.

He also launched the brand name "Northstar" for agriculture products from the state.

As for infrastructure, Abdullah said a multi-billion-ringgit coastal highway would soon connect Kuala Perlis and Simpang Empat in Perak.

He said Perlis would also benefit from the double tracking railway project, which would connect Ipoh with Padang Besar.

He added that the border town would have a RM46mil commercial container depot which would turn it into an important logistic centre.

"A halal hub will also be developed in Padang Besar to turn Perlis into a halal logistics centre within the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle," he said.