

# Wanted: Graduates to toil the land

NST - 12/12/2006

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Calling unemployed graduates: Dirty your hands and make money.

The Cabinet has set aside 20ha in Kluang, Johor, for graduates interested in cultivating rock melons.

Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said yesterday that the project was under the management of the newly-formed Malaysian Graduate Entrepreneurs Association.

"I have asked the association to set up a co-operative to clear the land.

"The planting of rock melons has started on a small scale. It is successful and I have asked that it be expanded," he said.

Muhyiddin said those interested in joining the project would receive financial help from the ministry.

He said the graduates could be guided to do well in agriculture.

He said careers in agriculture were becoming more popular with graduates.

"If they have an interest in it, then we wouldn't have the problem of unemployed graduates.

"They need not be trained in agriculture.

"In fact, even if they have been trained in Information and Communications Technology, we can send them for a short course to participate in the agricultural sector."

He said based on the response, the ministry's target of creating 10,000 agricultural entrepre-

neurs could be achieved.

"In the past two years, the response has been encouraging. We are going through a list of applications from entrepreneurs interested in starting small industries in 2007."

He added that the government had allocated RM250 million to develop primary agricultural industries. The money was in the form of grants, training, equipment and promotional activities for candidates.

He was speaking after launching the World Food Day programme at his ministry here.

He said the government had approved incentives totalling RM1.2 billion for those in agriculture-related industries.

"The incentives will include tax and capital credits. This includes not having to pay taxes for up to 10 years. This is to allow the entrepreneurs to reinvest their money and expand their business," he said.