

Harvesting success

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Farmers told to change mindset and shed 'poor' stigma

KUALA LUMPUR: Farmers must be serious in their undertakings to become successful and prove that farming does not have to be associated with poverty.

In making this call, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi noted that it had been a traditional notion that farmers and others connected with the agriculture sector were poor.

"I want all of you to do away with this stigma and prove that you have the ability and skills to be successful in your undertakings," he told National Farmers Association (Nafas) members at their annual general meeting at a hotel here yesterday.

"I do not see why you cannot succeed and become well-to-do based on the allocations given by the Government."

The Prime Minister made the appeal based on the sterling performance of Nafas, which made a profit of RM28.5mil this financial year, up 166.2% from last year's.

He also commended Nafas, established in 1972, for its efforts to help the 708,355 members involved in agro-based industries.

However, he added, farmers must change their mindset to think like businessmen and not depend on the Government forever.

"If you can shift to this mindset, I believe there will be renewed interest in the agriculture sector," he added.

Earlier, Abdullah said while it was easy to attract big biotechnology firms to Malaysia, the Government felt that developing its own human capital to do research and other related biotechnology work was important.

"I believe we have the strength to do a lot of things and to develop biotechnology companies which are our own," he told reporters after chairing the Biotechnology International Advisory Panel (BioIAP) meeting here yesterday.

"It is not just about placing big companies here to operate. We need to use the resources that we have."

BioIAP, set up as part of the Government's move to promote biotechnology, comprises leading international industry figures and academicians in agriculture, healthcare and industrial biotechnology.

Abdullah said the IAP members felt that the country's biotechnology push was going in the right direction, espe-

cially in spurring the economy.

He also said research and development should be given attention to make Malaysia more competitive in biotechnology.

The role of MARDI and the Palm Oil Research Institute Malaysia must be enhanced to produce quality research, he added.