

NEW STRAITS TIMES

DATE: 19 / 11 / 2007

# PM: Provide loans for agricultural projects

NST-19/11/2007

■ By Rosli Zakaria  
rosliz@nst.com.my

SETIU: Include agriculture when extending loans to small and medium-sized enterprises, the prime minister told banks yesterday.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said like manufacturing, agriculture was also an enterprise.

"Loans could be given out to group farming schemes or individuals.

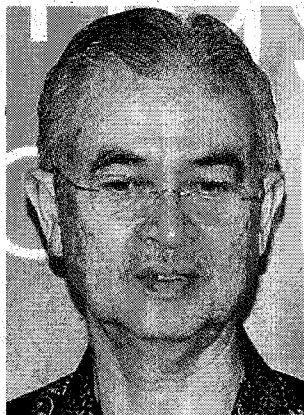
"The land must be sizeable to ensure the venture is viable. The SME Bank should look into this."

Abdullah said with the government promoting agriculture as a business and by providing channels for landowners to secure loans for farming, the problem of idle land could be overcome.

He spoke after visiting the fertigation project under the Sutratani scheme in Telaga Papan.

The project is a joint venture between the State Economic Development Corporation subsidiary, Terengganu Agrotek Development Corporation and JPB Greentech Sdn Bhd, which uses a hi-tech farming method from Holland.

The fertigation farming method involves the cultivation of selected crops in a controlled environment. The application of water and fer-



There are some people who will poison the minds of farmers. They will say that their venture will not succeed. They will try to break the spirit of the farmers... If we listen to these people, we will forever live a difficult life. The poor will remain poor and lazy.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

tiliser is controlled by computers.

So far, the company has invested RM4 million to develop 5.5 hectares.

It employs 30 workers under an incubator scheme where those who excel would be recommended loans to set up similar projects.

The project has produced 122,500kg of Japanese cucumber, 85,750kg of chillies and 24,500kg of French beans.

All the produce was sold in advance.

Abdullah said the success of the fertigation project should be made a model and inspire others to go into agriculture.

The project also proved that marketing was not a problem when buyers were confident about the quality of the product and its prompt delivery.

"It is important that farmers

have the will to acquire new knowledge and to change their mindsets and attitudes.

"They must also believe in themselves.

"There are some people who will poison the minds of farmers. They will say that their venture will not succeed.

"They will try to break the spirit of the farmers.

"Everything will be pictured as impossible or difficult to achieve without even trying, and they will say that such projects are only for big companies and the rich.

"If we listen to these people, we will forever live a difficult life. The poor will remain poor and lazy."

Later, speaking to about 10,000 people at a dinner at Sekolah Kebangsaan Budiman in Kuala Terengganu, Abdullah called for a "can do" attitude in regard to the economic corridors launched recently.

"If we have no confidence in ourselves, we will be backward."

He said the "Blue Wave", which helped Barisan Nasional regain the state from Pas in 2004, should not be confined to general elections.

"The spirit is parallel to the country's development. With it, we can bring big changes to the country as we strive to fulfil our national mission."