

NEW STRAITS TIMES

DATE: 28/10/2007

PM: Farmers must pool resources to succeed

NST-28/10/2007.

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SEREMBAN: Farmers must pool their resources or lose out on opportunities provided by the government, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

The prime minister said those who wanted to be successful could no longer rely on small plots of land.

"To make agriculture a viable and profitable venture, one has to diversify and use new technology," he said.

Speaking after launching the National Agricultural Convention at the Allson Klana Resort yesterday, Abdullah said poor economies of scale mainly affected Malay farmers who owned and lived off small plots of land.

"Be it padi, rubber or oil palm, many of those who toil on these lands are Malays and if this should go on, the plots will become less profitable."

Some 1,200 participants are attending the two-day convention, jointly organised by the Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Ministry and Umno.

Present were Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan.

Abdullah said more and more Malays were abandoning their agricultural land as they could not keep up with the competition and there was a lack of in-

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Prime Minister*

terest among their children to take over.

The prime minister said profits could be made by combining land and allowing others to work on them.

"This method has been proven successful in many areas in the country."

Abdullah said farmers could also form agro-co-operatives

which could diversify and increase their agricultural produce.

Earlier in his speech, he called on the Malays to work harder and realise their potential in the agriculture sector.

"They should not be satisfied with being small-time farmers. They need to work harder and change their mindset as well as create added value to their produce.

"The government has given agriculture a lot of attention, with numerous funds set up to help farmers increase their productivity."

Abdullah reiterated that the government wanted to produce some 10,000 agricultural entrepreneurs by 2010.

The prime minister said the Malays should emulate other races who had been successful in agriculture while making efforts to correct their own weaknesses.

"New fields like IT and biotechnology should be utilised to improve operations."

Abdullah said the Malays must believe that agriculture was profitable and praised entrepreneurs who had shown, through hard work, that there was money to be made from the sector.

Muhyiddin said big budgets would not ensure success if the mindset remained unchanged.

He said those involved in agriculture must look for practical, progressive and dynamic methods.