

PM: More incentives for investors in agro industries

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cial if one could not present it well.

He said a person who was eloquent could persuade people to agree to his suggestions even if his ideas were not that good.

Turning to education, Abdullah said the Government's move not to close the door on foreign colleges wanting to establish themselves in the country had provided opportunities for young people, both local and foreign, to pursue their studies in Malaysia.

Besides studying in this country, they also had the opportunity to understand the way of life of the local community better, he said.

As at the end of 2003, Abdullah said, some 40,000 foreign students from 162 countries had studied in Malaysia.

"From the economic standpoint, the presence of these students is good because of their large numbers," he said.

"Visits by their family members can also be regarded as 'education tourism'," he said.

Earlier, Abdullah said the Government was considering giving additional incentives to the private sector to invest in the agro-based industry to make it an important element of the country's economic growth, **SIDEK KAMISO** reports.

"The Government is ready to consider new ways to encourage small or large-scale investors to invest in this sector and ensure the success of the agro-based industry," he said.

He said the moves included introducing new incentive packages to reduce the investment risk, credit facilities based on cash flow and infrastructure facilities such as creating a marketing system for agro-based products and logistics support.

Abdullah said the Government planned to allow the Agriculture Ministry to take a central role in mobilising support from other ministries, particularly the Finance Ministry.

"To further this role, we have asked the Agriculture and Finance ministries to conduct studies on existing facilities and to give feedback to improve the rate of private sector investment in the agriculture sector and agro-based industry," said Abdullah.

He said the agriculture sector and agro-based industry formed the third engine of economic growth after the manufacturing and services sectors.

He said last year, the sector experienced a high growth rate of 5.5%.

In view of the role of the sector in the economy, Abdullah said he had requested state governments to develop it.

Earlier in his speech, Abdullah said although the agriculture sector had a lot of potential, it was still backward.

"The image of this sector is not good, playing a subsistence role and not dynamic," he said, adding that the situation had risen because some of the methods used in the sector were unproductive.