

RM20m to help youths venturing into agriculture

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BERA (Pahang): Youths involved in the agriculture sector nationwide can look forward to loan assistance as RM20mil has been set aside for this.

Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Ismail Sabri Yaakob said each applicant could apply for about RM15,000 to RM50,000 for their ventures.

He said youths should seize the opportunity as agriculture could provide good returns.

"Their ventures, if successful, can help the Government to address the problem of food shortages and high imports.

"At present, there is a shortage of food worldwide as rice-producing countries such as Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam and the Philippines are facing adverse weather conditions and other catastrophes.

"As such, there is not enough supply to be distributed to purchasing countries including Malaysia," he said after opening the 31st annual general meeting

of the Bera Farmers Association near here.

Ismail Sabri said that due to high local consumption, Malaysia had to import between 200,000 tonnes and 300,000 tonnes of rice every month from Thailand and India.

He said that to reduce imports, there must be efforts to develop idle land for padi farming.

"I hope all parties including associations and relevant agencies identify plots of land, which can be used for padi farming.

"Youths, on their part, can take up the loans to work on the ventures to reap profits when the harvest comes in," he said.

Ismail Sabri, who is also the Bera MP, said he was confident that if all the idle land in the country were to be developed, it could help to overcome the country's food imbalance.

The agricultural sector could also help to address unemployment among youths and help to eradicate poverty, he added.