

# PM vows clean govt

**SUN** - 4 NOV 2003

## Pak Lah: Civil service must be graft-free

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi pledged yesterday to crack down on government corruption and abuse of power and uphold democracy while fighting terrorism.

He said the public sector shoulders the responsibility to ensure national policies are implemented effectively and must reflect a clean and incorruptible image.

"Our resolve to have a civil service that is corruption-free should not be weakened by unhealthy practices in the private sector or by parties outside the government that contribute to this disease," said Abdullah, who is known as Mr Clean, in his maiden speech as prime minister to parliament.

On "checks and balances needed to prevent abuses of power", he said: "The practice of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy will continue to be supported and we must respect the separation of powers within the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.

"Crime prevention must be intensified. Vice that tears apart our moral values must be eradicated. We must fight groups involved in the underworld and vice activities, and expose those who collaborate with them.

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"The security of private property and personal safety particularly of women, children and visitors to our country must be assured," said Abdullah, who is home minister.

Speaking at the tabling of a motion of thanks to his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, he said he had inherited the heavy responsibility of governing a successful country and he cannot do it alone. He needs the cooperation and support from all - legislators, administrators, the private sector, political parties, the media and from Malaysian citizens from all walks of life - to work with him to take Malaysia to greater heights.

His speech was also fulsome in praise of Mahathir, describing him as "a hero to his nation and to his people - a hero who elevated his country in the eyes of the world".

Abdullah was moved to tears as he called on Allah for guidance and inspiration, strength and fortitude, patience and determination.

He took over on Friday from Mahathir, who was known to weep at emotional moments during the last few years of his 22-year tenure.

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## We must accept criticism and contrary views: PM

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"We believe democracy is the best system of governance. We must be open and ready to accept criticism and contrary views to ensure a culture of democracy thrives," Abdullah said.

However, he said, "democracy does not mean absolute freedom. Issues that inflame religious, racial, and cultural sentiments should not be sensationalised while attempts to undermine national security must be dealt with firmly".

Abdullah said Vision 2020 would continue to inspire and drive the nation towards holistic development and becoming a developed country.

"We must seek and identi-

fy new sources of economic growth. We must develop new approaches to enhance our competitiveness and strengthen our resilience to face global challenges."

He said the bumiputra development agenda in producing a commercial and industrial community, as well as a science and technology community, must be fair and just, based on meritocracy within the community itself.

The prime minister also said there is a need to ensure that women are accorded equality and not discriminated against in the formulation of policies, in the enforcement of these policies and in all levels of participation. - Agencies