

22 DEC 2003

Abdullah-Card

CHRISTMAS CARD FROM ABDULLAH

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 22 (Bernama) -- An unexpected Christmas card from none other than Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi himself would bring joy to many a Christian heart -- and 1,500 of them are lucky enough to get it this festive season.

The simple gesture reflects the religious tolerance that has existed in this country of 24 million people with various racial and religious backgrounds.

The cards have been sent out to pastors and Christian leaders all over the country who, together with their congregation, have offered kind prayers for the well-being of the country under Abdullah's new leadership.

The card, which bears the signature of the Prime Minister, would warm the heart of anyone who sees it for it shows caricatures of Malaysians from various ethnic origins holding hands and dancing in true "muhibah" spirit.

And the accompanying words, although simple, speak volume. They read: "In your heart...peace; In your home...happiness; In the world...love; In our country...unity".

Abdullah became Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister on Oct 31 following the retirement of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister's heartfelt message contained inside would no doubt linger in the minds of the recipients for a long time.

This is what he has to say:

"With best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2004. During this festive season, let us continue to be good neighbours and friends.

"Let us also strive to make Malaysia a kinder, more tolerant and better home for all of us.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and members of your church for your kind prayers and good wishes. Please pass on my gratitude and appreciation to your congregation."

It is understood that this is the first time that a Malaysian Prime Minister has sent personal Christmas greetings directly to Malaysians professing the Christian faith.

-- BERNAMA

MAM MFJ AHH RM