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PM: Public's views to help shape 9MP

By Arman Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP) will be a product of the Malaysian people whose views and opinions will help shape it, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said that Malaysians should feel they had ownership of the plan, instead of it being imposed on them.

He added that the formulation of the 9MP would be a consultative process, with as much input from the people as possible.

"It will be a plan made of many contributions from the people. Talk to people, take their views and opinions," he said in an interview.

Abdullah was speaking on RTM's Fast Forward programme tonight, hosted by Malaysia Airlines chairman Datuk Dr Munir Majid.

Munir also asked Abdullah to comment on agriculture as the "third engine of growth".

Abdullah said the potential for agriculture was "tremendous".

"It is not the agriculture that we knew.

"It is agriculture that will project a new profile," he said.

During the interview, Abdullah cited the example of an entrepreneur who produced tapioca chips, packaging them well for distribution to major supermarkets.

"She has expanded the horizons of her business," Abdullah said.

He added that the herbal industry was also huge, and was worth billions.

These new industries would help improve the lot of rural people, he said.

"I want them to have more income."

Throughout the interview, Abdullah strongly emphasised human capital development.

"We are climbing up to 2020. We need men and women of strong character."

Asked to comment on the national Budget deficit, Abdullah said it was being reduced gradually to protect the economy.

He said a drastic curtailing of the Government's expenditure to reduce the deficit could lead to economic contraction and unemployment.

"We have registered higher growth than 2003," he said, adding that there had also been a slight drop in unemployment while the cost of living had remained about the same and reserves continued to grow.

Abdullah also spoke of developing the Malays, in particular the "towering personalities" he had recently envisaged for the nation.

On the question of how confident he was on developing the Malays, what with his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad having admitted failure after serving 22 years, Abdullah replied: "I think I can do it. The environment is different. There are better training facilities. We have better teachers. Insyallah, we will succeed."

He also spoke on the improvements being made to the public service, with work being done to reduce backlogs, settle cases and deal with problems plaguing government departments.

On the development of decision-making centres, he called for the delegation of duties instead of having "applications being pushed up to the district officer".

(END) Source : New Straits Times