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Abdullah pledges to work hard to make Vision 2020 a reality

SEREMBAN, Sun. - Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi tonight gave an assurance that he would work hard with Barisan Nasional leaders and the people to make Vision 2020 a reality.

Speaking when launching the 20th Chinese cultural festival, the Deputy Prime Minister said he would ensure that Vision 2020, mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, would be achieved.

"Many people have asked me what will happen to the Vision once Dr Mahathir steps down. I want to give an assurance that I will continue with whatever efforts that have been taken by the Government in order to make it a reality," he said.

"That is why we must continue to remain united and live in harmony," he said to the applause from about 20,000 people who thronged the Seremban Municipal Council field to join in the festival.

More than 50 Chinese cultural groups from all over the country are taking part in the week-long festival, which will end Sept 14.

Abdullah, who is also BN deputy chairman, said that Malaysians treasured the unity and co-operation prevalent in the multi-racial community.

"Because we are united, we have been able to live in harmony and the country remains stable, politically and economically."

Abdullah said Malaysians had always believed in "unity in diversity" as it had helped to protect the country from negative and threatening elements.

Noting that Malaysia was one of the most stable countries in Asia, he said the continued support from the people would enable the Government to bring further development.

Also present were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad, MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, the Federation of Malaysian Chinese Assembly Hall chairman Tan Sri Chong Chin Shoong, Negri Sembilan Chinese Assembly Hall president Chew Seng Yong, State MCA chief Datuk Hon Choon Kim and State Executive Councillors.

Chong, meanwhile, hoped the annual festival, first held in 1984 in Selangor, would be included in the Malaysian calendar of events.

He said such festivals would help generate greater interest and understanding of Chinese culture and custom among the races.

Earlier, the festival got off to a rousing start amid a burst of colour and sound with some 10,000 participants, young and old, taking to the streets in a celebration of all things uniquely Chinese.

Lion dance troupes performed along the streets, stilt-walkers and acrobatic cyclists kept the crowd spell-bound while women carrying lanterns added brilliant splashes of colour.

There was also a vintage car and motorcycle parade and brass band performances.