

ABDULLAH
ON THE MALAYSIAN
GLOBAL ROADSHOW
AND AT THE UNITED NATIONS

GRAFT FIGHT TAKING BITE

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● **PM: I haven't lost momentum**

DATUK Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi believes the Government's campaign against corruption is beginning to yield results where it matters most — on the ground.

There is data to suggest that more public-sector employees, including police officers, are turning down bribes and reporting cases to their superiors, said the Prime Minister.

BRENDAN PEREIRA
 reporting from
NEW YORK



"Some people have even returned envelopes. So the results are there," he told reporters at the end of a gruelling day on which he met fund managers, delivered

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PRIVATE MOMENTS: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi meets Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (picture, left) and Philippine President Gloria Arroyo at the Second Asean-UN Summit at the UN Headquarters in New York, yesterday. — Bernama pictures

'I believe in punitive and preventive measures'

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three speeches at United Nations-related events and attended a series of bilateral meetings.

During his session with investors, who represented some of the biggest funds in the United States, Abdullah sketched some of the main issues on his agenda.

When it came to talking about fighting corruption — a cornerstone of his administration — he said that the authorities were doing all they could to reduce graft.

"People believe that I have begun to lose momentum. I assure you I have not," he said to a roomful of managers from funds which included Capital World, Putnam Investment Management LLC and Fortress Investment Group, which between them have funds worth hundreds of billions of dollars to invest.

It is just as well that Abdullah touched on this issue.

During the closed-door session with eight corporate leaders who accompanied the PM on the Malaysian Global Roadshow and in one-on-one sessions later, several investors wondered whether Abdullah had the stamina to see through all the reforms he had started.

In the early part of the year, critics said the campaign against corruption was losing steam, using the paucity of big names being charged in court to support their thesis.

But the PM reiterated that the campaign had two limbs — punitive and preventive.

We must not be swayed by doomsayers. Those who believe in the inevitability of a clash between civilisations are people who have lost trust in the rationality of the human person. Such people belong in the group of extremists of this world. We must confront them and discredit their arguments.'

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

At a late night Press conference to sum up the day's events, he said the order had been given out to prosecute anyone if there was evidence of graft. But just as important as enforcement was creating a culture in the country that abhorred the giving and taking of bribes.

"I firmly believe in employing both punitive and preventive measures," he said.

"The measures taken so far have already yielded some positive results, and will be supplemented by other initiatives in future."

In his meeting with fund managers, Abdullah also set out some points which he said provided a road map of Malaysia's economic direction.

Among them were:

- The Malaysia of today is different from the one nearly ravaged by the Asian Financial crisis. Extensive restructuring has

made the economy more robust, reserves at US\$78.7 billion (RM291.19 billion) are at a record high, and several surveys have named Malaysia as one of the world's best investment destinations.

- Fiscal discipline will be an important objective of Government.

- For Malaysia to become a developed nation, it must be global and ready to be more competitive.

- Malaysia must continuously reinvent its economic model by investing in new growth engines such as bio-fuel and outsourcing.

The consensus was that the session with the American investors was more engaging than the meeting on Monday in London where fund managers, who have long by-passed Malaysia, were hesitant in asking questions as they had not kept abreast of

developments in the country for a number of years.

The US-based fund managers had more questions for the Prime Minister, asking him on the New Economic Policy and its impact on growth, the currency policy, on the number of Malaysian students studying abroad, on the brain drain and on the biggest challenge Malaysia will face in becoming a developed nation by 2020.

The roadshow was initiated and organised by Merrill-Lynch and Malaysian financial services group ECM Libra Berhad.

Later in the day, Abdullah spoke at the informal summit on inter-religious, inter-cultural and inter-civilisational dialogue.

He said that countries had a duty to put a stop to dangerous predictions about the clash between the Islamic world and the Western world.

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"Those who believe in the inevitability of a clash between civilisations are people who have lost trust in the rationality of the human person.

"Such people belong in the group of extremists of this world. We must confront them and discredit their arguments."

Although held on the sidelines of the UN assembly, there was a good turnout for the event.

Abdullah used the opportunity to share a message — that Malaysia was proof that it is possible to maintain inter-communal and inter-religious peace, stability and prosperity through dialogue and co-operation.