

Revamp for agencies set up to help Penang Malays

• **By Sharanjit Singh and Audrey Derma wan**

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GEORGE TOWN: Agencies given the task of helping Malays in Penang would be revamped, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, as he moved to address discontent over the status of the community here.

Abdullah said problems laced by Malays on the island were serious and had to be addressed soon.

As such, he had directed Second Finance Minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop to identify problems concerning development on the island.

"We don't want any community or group to be left out of mainstream development.

"We want the best solution to whatever problem that arises," he said.

The Prime Minister also asked Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon to hold discussions with Umno leaders and find out what their grievances were.

Over the past few weeks, several Penang Umno politicians had assailed the State Government, in particular Koh, for neglecting the Malays.

Koh and fellow Gerakan politicians hit back strongly during the party's general assembly over the weekend.

Abdullah said one drawback to helping Malays in the State was that the agencies set up to help the community were still doing things like they used to 10 or 20 years ago.

"This cannot be so and we need to revamp these agencies so they stay in tune with current times," he said.

Abdullah said he also wanted to see a more balanced development in Penang, with focus on Seberang Prai and Balik Pulau.

He said both areas had been ear-

marked for greater things, with Seberang Prai being part of the northern corridor development and Balik Pulau located near the second link.

He made these points when opening the Tanjong Umno division office at Bishop Street, here, yesterday.

Also present were Koh and division chief Datuk Ahmad Ibnihajar.

Abdullah said another aspect that needed to be looked into was the development of human capital.

He announced a special RM2 million grant for this purpose and expressed hope that the money would be utilised properly.

Meanwhile, Ahmad said Malays, in Penang had been left out in many ways and went on to read out statistics to prove his point.

He cited the disparity in per capita income among the Malays, Chinese and Indians and the migration of Malays from the island to the mainland.

The State Government under Koh's leadership had failed to address all these issues, he said, adding that something should be done immediately to solve the problem.

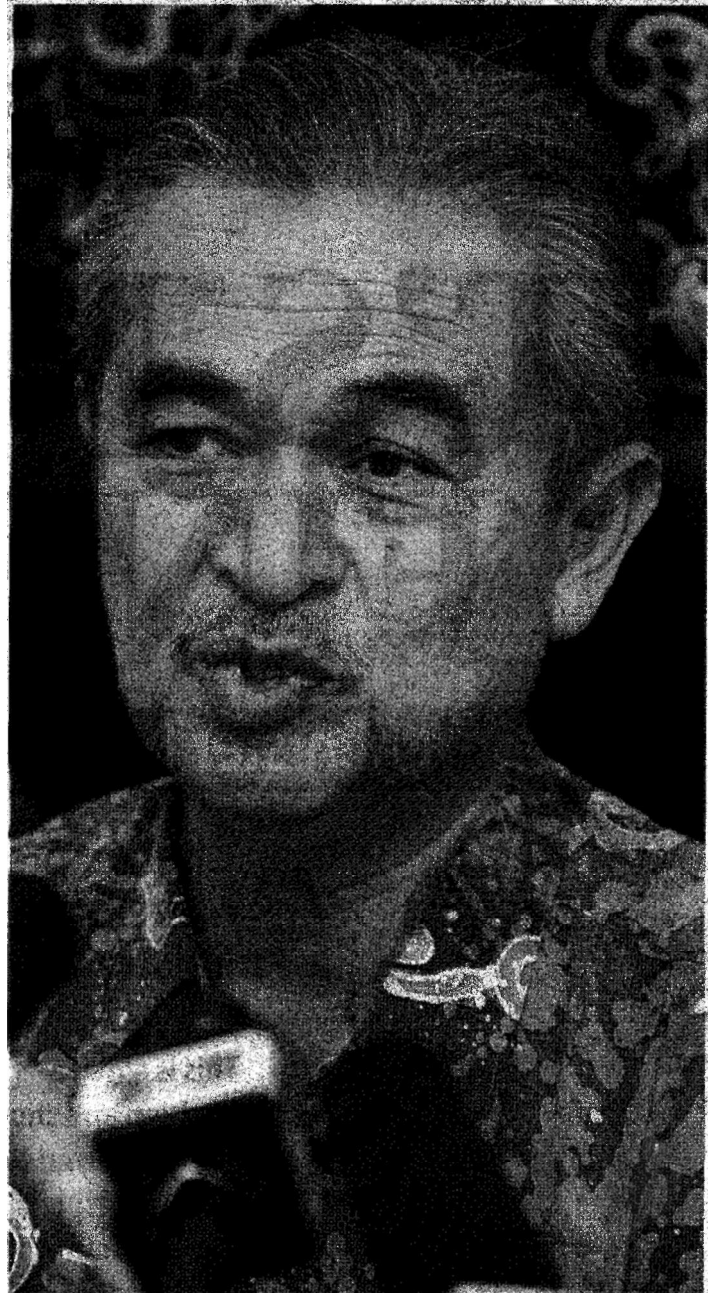
Ahmad, also called on Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik to retract his statement that Malays were not left out of mainstream development but that they themselves chose to be sidelined.

Earlier, Abdullah opened the feluog Expressway and was briefed on the second bridge project at Batu Maung and Batu Kawan.

He hoped the bridge would help spur economic development in Penang and surrounding States.

However, he said good infrastructure alone would not suffice if the environment and security aspects, were not taken care of.

"I would like to remind Koh to make sure cleanliness is maintained."



Abdullah says problems faced by Malays in Penang are serious