

# Abdullah brushes off talk of early general election

**BACHOK:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has scoffed at talk that Barisan Nasional might call for an early general election to derive political gains from the implementation of the 9th Malaysia Plan.

He said the coalition had received a thumping mandate from the people in the last general election.

"The mandate is for a five-year term. So why must we unnecessarily call for an election in the second or third year?" he told newsmen after handing over transitional aid to tobacco growers here yesterday.

Summing up his two-day visit to Kelantan, Abdullah said he could sense a major change of attitude among the people as well as among state Umno leaders.

The people, he said, were res-

ponding well to the RM7.6bil worth of development projects to be implemented in the state under the 9th Plan.

"I have made an effort to gauge their feedback during the speeches and it was good," he said.

Abdullah said he was encouraged by the strong unity among Umno leaders here.

"If there are any problems, they should thrash it out in the spirit of consensus," he said.

"When the party is strong, the people will give their support."

On another matter, Abdullah urged the state governments of Penang, Sabah and Sarawak, together with the Federal Territory Ministry, to oversee wisely religious or ethnic issues, as it was important that emotions do not rise over Article 11.4 of the Federal Constitution.

To date, nine states have

enacted legislation that restricts or controls non-Muslims from propagating their faiths to Muslims, but the four have yet to ratify such legislation.

"The four states must take action to not allow any emotions or sentiments to emerge over religious or ethnic issues."

On Malaysia's offer to deploy peacekeeping troops in the ceasefire zone in southern Lebanon, he said some countries were cautious or indecisive over the offer.

He said Israel was among those not keen and perhaps may have voiced this to other nations.

"They do not want us to go. Some countries are cautious over our and Indonesia's offer. Israel is not keen, I think, because they know we strongly oppose their actions.