

A National Mission

Abdullah flags off what may turn out to be the toughest race Malaysians will ever run

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“
We have no time to lose. Only 15 years stand between now and Vision 2020.”

Abdullah

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KUALA LUMPUR: It is more than a slew of targets. It is more than spending RM200 billion over the next five years to build another bridge and a monorail system for Penang, and railways, highways and schools throughout the country.

It is certainly more than the ambitious plans he carved out for biotechnology, agriculture, tourism and increasing the number of engineers, researchers and scientists.

When Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi lifted the veil on the Ninth Malaysia Plan yesterday, he was flagging off what may turn out to be the toughest race Malaysians will ever run – the last 15 years before the cherished goal of becoming a developed nation is reached.

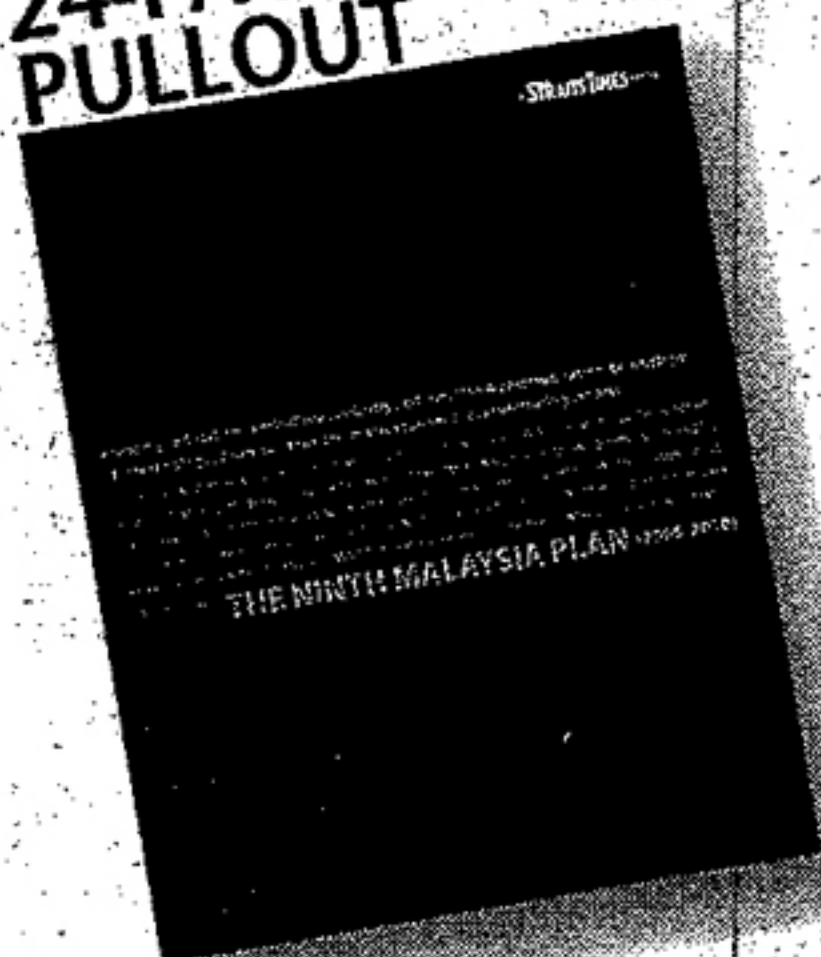
Some may call the 9MP the final push. Some may call it the home stretch.

Abdullah calls it the “National Mission” because he knows that its success depends on every Malaysian embracing it as his or her own plan for a better tomorrow.

The Prime Minister’s two-hour speech in Parliament was a road map of where the country should be heading and it was sprinkled liberally with optimism, lofty ideals and a constant reminder that no one will be left behind in the final push to the peak.

But there was an unmistakable sense of urgency in his message.

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PM: Every Malaysian has a role to play

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"We need to act quickly. Only 15 years stands between us and Vision 2020. We must make these 15 years the best years in our effort to stand tall and proud in 2020," the Prime Minister urged.

Abdullah said the NMP was not just a five-year economic programme but was a mission in which every Malaysian had a role to play.

The development blueprint for 2006-2010 shifts the focus of state spending away from huge construction projects and towards building a more resilient economy.

The key thrusts of the plan are boosting the economy, stamping out poverty and improving the quality of life and governance.

It outlines plans for more balanced development in under-developed regions in the north, east and southern parts of the peninsula and in Sabah and Sarawak.

The idea is to make sure that when Malaysia becomes a developed country in 2020, the income gap between rural and urban areas would have been narrowed.

It spells out the urgency to build Malaysia's human capital bank to meet challenges and intense competitiveness from emerging economies and awakening giants like China and India.

Billions of ringgit will be spent to improve the country's education system and more money than ever will be poured into programmes to produce more engineers and scientists here.

Said Abdullah: "If we want to become a knowledge-based economy, if we want to become a developed country, human capital development must be stressed."

He made clear that more must be done to address the economic imbalance among the different races but it would not be by taking from any ethnic group. It will be by expanding the economic pie through sustainable growth.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES	8MP		9MP	
	Expenditure	Development Allocation	Private Finance Initiatives	Total
Agricultural Development	7,749	11,435	350	11,785
Mineral Resource Development	47	141	0	141
Commerce & Industry	10,174	19,891	310	20,201
Transport	31,813	31,876	634	32,510
Communications	560	533	0	533
Energy & Public Utilities	12,722	21,805	0	21,805
Feasibility Study	421	338	0	338
Research & Development	1,960	3,868	0	3,868
Education & Training	43,729	41,114	9,472	50,586
Health	9,506	10,710	878	11,588
Information & Broadcasting	450	450	0	450
Housing	6,972	9,947	1,565	11,512
Culture, Youth & Sports	1,113	1,394	0	1,394
Local Authorities & Welfare Services	5,942	9,121	0	9,121
Village & Community Development	1,665	2,218	0	2,218
Security	22,042	21,203	4,276	25,479
General Administration	13,135	13,957	2,515	16,472

• Figures in RM (billion)

Abdullah said several times in his speech that reducing the income disparity between the races would remove a major impediment in race relations.

The Government, he said, would embrace a more holistic approach to redress the economic imbalance among the races.

It will do so by eradicating poverty and spending more money to develop rural areas.

"Fair" and "just" were two words that he used repeatedly in his speech.

It said a lot about the Prime Minister and how he governs the country.

It said a lot about how he believes revenue should be spent. Not only in urban areas but also in less glamorous parts of the country. Not only on big flashy projects but on preparing Malaysians to face a

more competitive environment.

At the tail-end of his speech, as he asked the Almighty to bless his people and his country, he choked and his voice broke. He struggled to compose himself several times before eventually ending the two-hour-long address. The response from the House was spontaneous. Ministers, backbenchers and Opposition members rose to give him an ovation.

