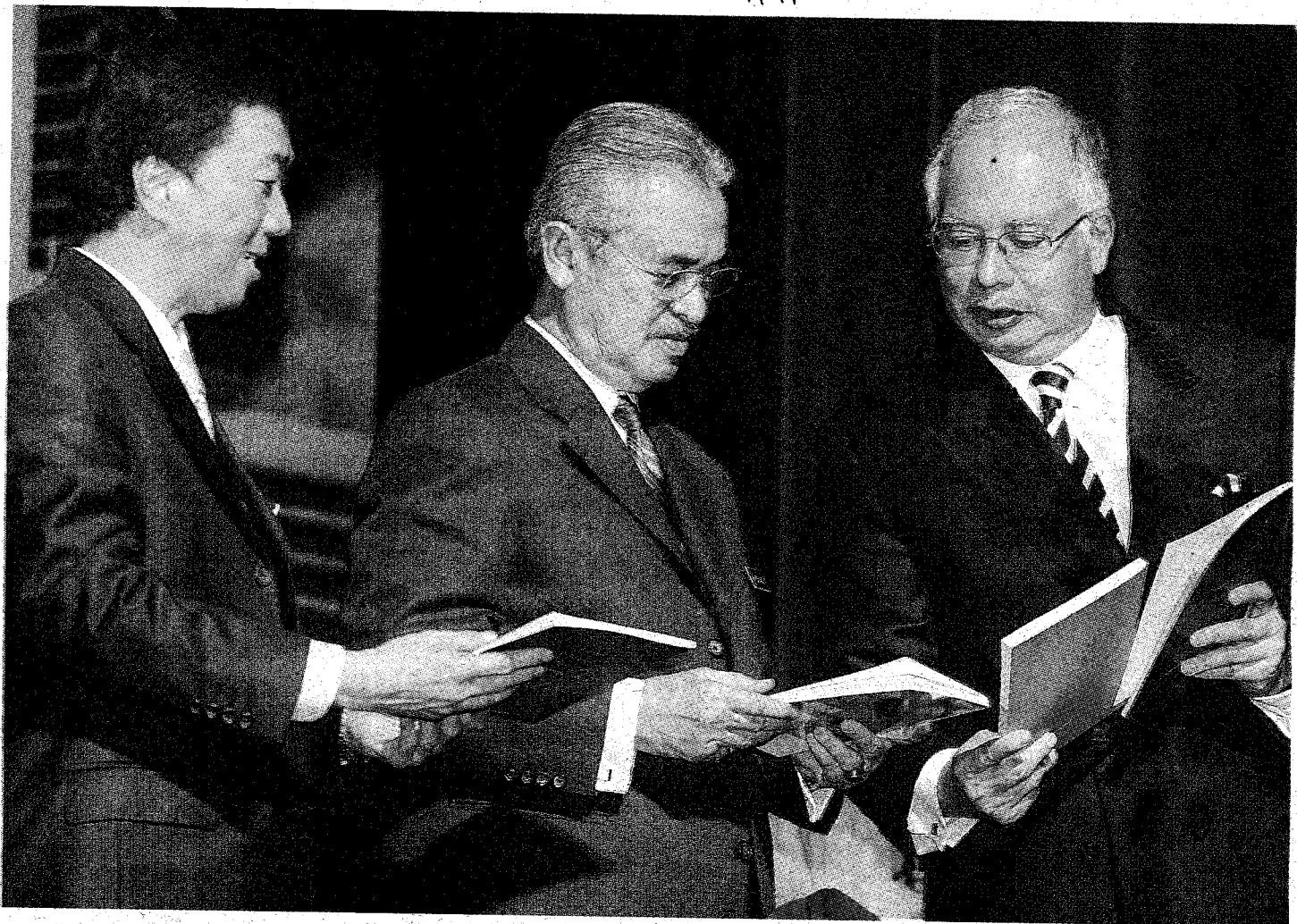


# Abdullah outlines perks for property sector

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(From left) Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak perusing guidebooks at a national conference to improve the government's delivery system yesterday.

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**PETALING JAYA:** The time taken to approve construction projects will be slashed from five years to six months in an incentive package unveiled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday to boost investments.

The impetus, aimed at cutting down bureaucracy and improving the nation's competitiveness, also include:

- expanding the role of the current One-Stop Centre (OSC). It will now process development applications simultaneously and systematically via a committee headed by council presidents and made up of other technical departments officers;

- replacing the Certificate of Fitness for Occupation (CFO) with the professionally issued Certificate of Completion and Compliance (CCC);

- the drafting of a Building and Common Property Act 2007 to ensure better maintenance and management of stratified properties;

- waiving of the licence deposit for developers who opt for the Build-Then-Sell (BTS) system;

- the reduction of up to four months for the processing of development proposals; and,

- the option for developers to replace the quota to build low-cost homes with medium-cost homes.

Abdullah said approvals for selected projects, such as the Build-Then-Sell, high-impact projects, government and foreign investors' projects, would be even shorter — within four months.

"I believe shortening the timeframe would have a positive impact on the construction industry, investors and business people who have long waited for less bureaucracy and the lowering of hidden costs in Malaysia," he said when opening a national conference to improve the government's delivery system yesterday.

He said the improvements would not only be felt by the rakyat but also would contribute to the nation's gross domestic product as a result of housing projects, factories, buildings and offices being completed faster.

With the infrastructure devel-

opment taking place at a faster pace, Abdullah hoped to see more jobs and income generated for the people.

"With these incentives, I believe it will spur the country's competitiveness. This is not the government's first and last effort.

"The government will continue to improve so that our mission and vision will be fulfilled."

He said he would monitor the impact and effectiveness of the initiatives, and that one of the clearest indications would be the performance of the property and construction sectors.

Abdullah said replacing CFO with the CCC would be a boon for the construction industry as the CFOs, issued by the local authorities, were causing numerous delays.

However, under the CCC system, certified professionals like architects and engineers are authorised to approve buildings for vacant possession.

"Although the issuance of CCC will be managed by the professionals, the local authorities will continue to monitor the construction to ensure it is done according to regulations.

"At the same time, they risk losing their good name, which is also an effective mechanism to ensure they are held accountable for their work," he said.

On the Building and Common Property Act 2007, Abdullah said a Commissioner of Building (COB) — headed by local councils' presidents — had been created as a bridge between owners and developers to solve issues related to management and maintenance of stratified properties.

"Problems related to maintenance of strata title properties had caused many buildings to be badly maintained, thus posing danger to residents."

Abdullah also expressed hope that with the creation of COB, all problems related to management and maintenance could be reduced.

In this context, he said, amendments had also been made to the Strata Title Act, requiring developers to apply for strata title not more than six months after CCC and vacant-possession were given.

He expected the issuance of strata titles to be shortened from a few years to 12 months.