

Najib: It reflects confidence in economy

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PASIR PUTIH: The report by the international merchant bank Merrill Lynch on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's leadership was testimony of foreign investors' growing confidence in the country's economy, the deputy prime minister said.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the bank had made a fair evaluation on the basis of its research and expertise.

"The statement was made based on their assessment of market forces. Strong foreign investor confidence is reflected in the stock exchange, the ringgit value and in Malaysia as an investment destination.

"This we can't deny since market reactions clearly support the opinion of Merrill Lynch," he said when commenting on the bank's report front-paged by NST yesterday.

Merrill Lynch was quoted as saying that Abdullah's leadership, often criticised for being slow, indecisive and too consensual, had not

been given due credit.

The analysis by Hong Kong-based economist Arthur Woo said Abdullah's style of leadership was needed by the country to rejuvenate its long-term economic growth prospects in the face of rapid globalisation.

In a speech earlier at the launch of a programme called "Gandingan Gemilang Kasih", which was attended by 1,200 former Pas members and supporters nationwide who had crossed over to Umno, Najib called on Kelantan to vote for change after 17 years of Pas government.

Najib said Umno was confident of winning the state in the coming general election.

"Judging by the good responses from the people to our organised functions, this bodes well for us.

"Our party machinery is well prepared and the teamwork is admirable. Although we can't reveal our preparations, we are not worried."

Najib also received membership forms from 250 ex-Pas members and supporters from Kok Lanas and Rantau Panjang.