

PM: Bright outlook for economy this year

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysians have reason to cheer as the economic climate appears bullish in the Year of the Boar.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said economic indicators for the nation's future were positive with the trade figure for 2006 surpassing RM1 trillion.

The prime minister said Bursa Malaysia's market barometer, the Kuala Lumpur Composite Index, was also bullish, auguring well for the economy.

The government has also adopted several strategies to improve the business climate while promoting investments and employment opportunities for Malaysians, he said in his Chinese New Year message.

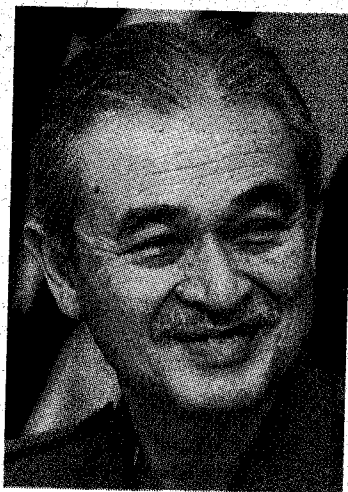
He said 2007 was very significant for the nation as Malaysia was celebrating its 50th year of independence, Visit Malaysia Year 2007 and the implementation of Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP) projects.

Abdullah, however, reminded the people not to be complacent as there were many domestic and external challenges ahead.

"We need to raise our efficiency and productivity. We must continue to increase our competitiveness at the international level. We must continue to add value to our products. We must continue to develop our human capital.

"We must succeed in our efforts to realise the vision of becoming a developed nation by 2020."

Abdullah said the positive economic outlook needed to be complemented with a corresponding effort to further strengthen na-



Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi says don't be complacent

tional unity.

He said Malaysians were fortunate to celebrate Chinese New Year in a peaceful, warm, friendly and joyous atmosphere.

Efforts to build a stronger Malaysia, he said, would be fruitless if the people did not work together towards greater unity for their common good.

The prime minister said Malaysians should be proud of the uniqueness of the nation with its diversity of races, cultures and religions.

Abdullah wanted the spirit of consensus to be further promoted and inculcated at all levels of the community.

"As the prime minister, I will focus my efforts towards creating a multi-racial community which is dynamic, progressive, living in peace and harmony, confident and competitive and upholding cultural traditions together."



Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting says preserving traditions is crucial

MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said Malaysians should strengthen solidarity and understanding and work together to heighten competitiveness in an era of globalisation.

This was because international competition posed greater challenges.

"We should also inculcate the spirit of lifelong learning, acquire more knowledge and enhance personal values for our country to accomplish the status of an industrialised nation."

Ong, who is Housing and Local Government Minister, said preserving traditions like lion dances, the *yee sang* dish and family reunions was crucial.

He also reminded Malaysians not to forget the less fortunate during the festive season.

Ong also hoped the crime rate would decline this year.

MIC president Datuk Seri S.



Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu urges enhancement of race relations

Samy Vellu urged Malaysians to enhance race relations and mutual co-operation to ensure that the nation continued to progress and prosper.

Samy Vellu, who is the Works Minister, reminded the people to understand the values and traditions of the country's plural society to avoid misunderstandings.

He urged road users to obey traffic rules for their safety and that of others.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said Malaysians could overcome challenges from within and outside if they were united.

"I believe the worst may be over and foresee brighter days ahead. Our fundamentals are strong and we have leveraged on our perseverance, tenacity and survival skills to rise above obstacles and challenges," said the Energy, Water and Communications Minister.