

# Task force to speed up reform, boost growth

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** A high-powered 23-member task force, hand-picked from the public and private sectors, was set up yesterday to promote faster reform in the country's delivery system and enhance economic activity.

After months of expressing frustration at the lethargic pace of reforms, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday named the task force — which reports directly to him — to facilitate business and overhaul archaic and unnecessary licensing and bureaucratic procedures.

The task force will be jointly headed by chief secretary to the government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan and, from the private sector, by Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers president, Datuk Yong Poh Kon.

The other members are 12 top civil servants from ministries engaged in dealing with businesses and the public, and nine leading private sector individuals.

The task force has been mandated to identify and recommend necessary steps to change procedures, rules and laws which will make conducting business much easier.

The first job of the task force is to review issues affecting delivery systems in local governments to make them more efficient, responsive and business-friendly.

Abdullah expressed confidence that the private sector-public sector team would result in vast improvements in the business environment, encourage more investments and create more jobs for Malaysians.

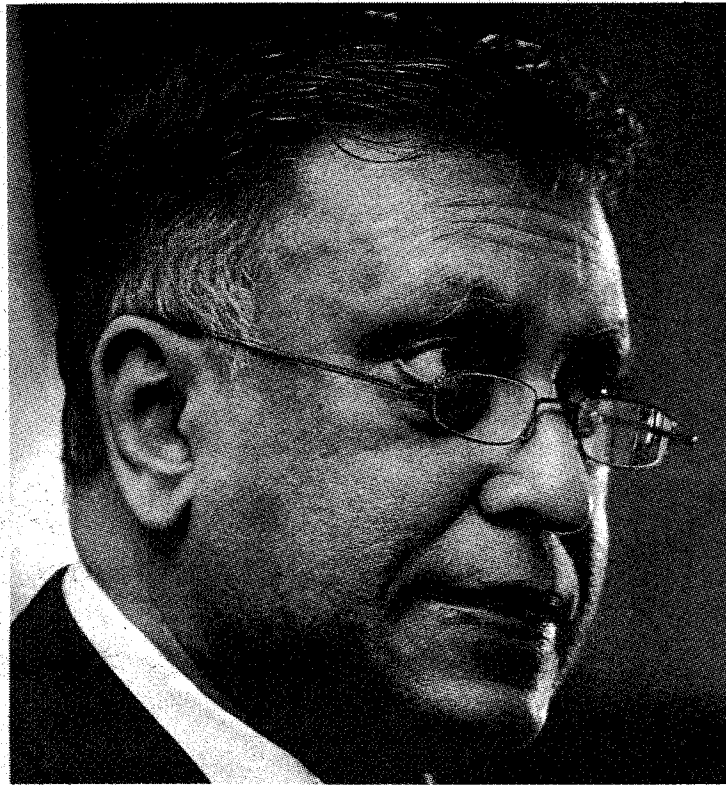
The task force will be called *Pemudah*, the Bahasa Malaysia acronym for Special Task Force To Facilitate Business.

Second Finance Minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop, in an interview with the *New Straits Times*, gave an insight into the thinking behind setting up the high-powered task force.

"The prime minister has told us on many occasions that he wants 2007 to be the year of implementation. He wants this to be the year where:

- projects are implemented effectively;
- unnecessary licensing requirements are eliminated;
- bureaucratic processes are reduced and, where necessary, removed altogether;
- minimise leakages and wastage to ensure projects under the Ninth Malaysia Plan bring about the benefits that we need to achieve our vision of becoming a developed nation by 2020.

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"All that we need now is effective implementation," Nor Mohamed said.

He added that Abdullah believed that the private sector would contribute immensely to the task force by identifying the road blocks, bureaucratic delays and outdated laws and regulations they faced in doing business.

The public sector, which would be working hand-in-hand with their private sector counterparts, could then focus on initiating the changes and on implementation.

And the timing could not be more crucial, said Nor Mohamed.

"Malaysia is back on the radar screen of foreign investors.

"The major macro economic indicators are positive.

"There is a benign and favourable environment in terms of growth, employment, low inflation, earnings growth and liquidity.

"The government-linked companies' reforms have been well received both at home and abroad.

"Given these factors, the task force is a necessary and effective measure to promote growth and productivity to higher levels," Nor Mohamed said.

And to top it all, Nor Mohamed said "there is a strong political will and government servants and the public sector are excited about

contributing to greater achievement. If we can effect all these changes, then the path to greater success is very bright".

Nor Mohamed added that as part of the process of facilitating business, he will be meeting all secretaries-general of the different ministries tomorrow to ensure payments are made on time and projects are implemented on schedule.

Other members of the task force are:

#### PUBLIC SECTOR:

- Public Service Department director-general Tan Sri Ismail Adam;
- Treasury secretary-general Tan Sri Izzuddin Dali;
- PM's Department Implementation Co-ordination Unit director-general Tan Sri Khalid Ramli;
- International Trade and Industry secretary-general Datuk Abdul Rahman Mamat;
- Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (Mampu) director-general Datuk Yaacob Hussin;
- Natural Resources and Environment Ministry secretary-general Datuk Suboh Mohd Yasin;
- Housing and Local Government Ministry secretary-general Datuk Ahmad Fuad Ismail;
- Human Resources Ministry secretary-general Datuk Thomas George M.S. George;
- Federal Territories Ministry secretary-general Datuk Ahmad

Pheisal Talib;

- Malaysian Industrial Development Authority (Mida) director-general Datuk R. Karunakaran;
- Small-Medium Industries Development Corporation (Smidec) chief executive Hafsa Hashim; and,
- Local Government Department director-general Datin Arpah Abdul Razak.

#### PRIVATE SECTOR:

- American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce past president Datuk Nicholas S. Zeffreys;
- Malaysian Employers Federation president Datuk Azman Shah Harun;
- Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Mike Krishnan;
- National Council of Commerce and Industry deputy president Pardip Kumar Kukreja;
- Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers board member Dr Andy Seo;
- Symphony House Group Bhd chief executive Datuk Azman Yahya;
- Ahmad Zaki Resources Bhd deputy executive chairman Datuk Seri Wan Zaki Wan Muda;
- Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce Economic Research Unit head Chua Tia Guan; and,
- Tan Sri G. Gnanalingam, executive chairman of the Kelang Multi Terminal Sdn Bhd (which operates Westports in Port Klang).