

Pay hike not a sign of polls, says Abdullah

NST-23/5/2007.

TOKYO: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has scoffed at the notion that his recently announced pay increases for government workers signalled an impending general election.

"Why must any good thing we do be linked to the general election?" he told Malaysian newsmen, when asked to comment on the speculation that Monday's big pay revision was a prelude to the polls.

"It seems as if we are working just because there is going to be a general election.

"We are working for the country and it is for the long term. We want the people to be with us as we continue for several more years to achieve our development objectives, such as Vision 2020.

"We want to continue to be of service to the country to ensure future growth and development."

Abdullah, who is here on a five-day visit, had announced a salary increase of between 7.5 per cent and 35 per cent for civil servants and between nine per cent and 42 per cent for the police and armed forces, besides a doubling in the Cost of Living Allowance, starting July 1.

He said the public sector had been asking for a pay increase for some time.

"They asked for it before,

but we didn't have the means to give it to them. Now that we have, we can afford to do so. They have been waiting for so long. It's about time they got it," Abdullah said.

Asked if the private sector should also follow suit, Abdullah said companies should decide for themselves. "It really depends on them whether they can afford to give it or not," he said. — *By Fauziah Ismail*