

# Country on track to reach Vision 2020 goal, says PM

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The government is confident the country will attain developed nation status by 2020 despite facing global economic challenges.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the country's strong economy, buoyed by projects and programmes under the Ninth Malaysia Plan, would provide the impetus for rapid growth.

"This is evident from the country's total external trade volume which surpassed RM1 trillion last year," the prime minister said, while pledging the government's and people's loyalty and allegiance at the installation ceremony of Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin as the 13th Yang di-Pertuan Agong at Istana Negara yesterday.

Abdullah said the government had mapped out strategies for the three core sectors — manufacturing, services and agriculture — to sustain growth.

The manufacturing sector, the main

export contributor, would be strengthened with a shift of emphasis to value-added products.

To achieve this, he said, the government would encourage growth of industries such as petrochemical, maritime and aerospace.

It will also pay attention to the services sector, with plans to turn Malaysia into a regional services hub for the education, health and Islamic banking sectors.

For the agriculture sector, the thrust of the new agriculture plan is modern production methods and value-adding.

"Such efforts will not only boost the sector but also help the government improve the quality of rural life.

"We want to ensure the country's wealth and prosperity are enjoyed by people from all strata of society."

In terms of balanced development, the government was actively pursuing

development corridors in south Johor, north and east of the peninsula, Sabah and Sarawak.

He said the northern and eastern development corridors were in the final stages of planning and were slated for launch before year-end.

The Sabah and Sarawak development corridors will be launched soon.

Developing the development corridors remains a priority so that the fruit of growth and progress can be tasted fairly by every Malaysian.

Abdullah said the country's spirit of tolerance and co-operation, the basis for race relations among a multiracial and multi-religious society, had earned praise in the eyes of the world.

"The country's independence and progress cannot materialise without strong unity and honest co-operation among the various races," said Abdullah who hoped the 50th anniversary of independence would be marked by the

country remaining a safe and prosperous place under the reign of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Abdullah added the government would not compromise when it came to dealing with those who undermined the country's stability.

On the international front, he said, Malaysia would continue to play an active role, especially in Asean affairs.

As the chair of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, he said Malaysia would continue to protect the interests of Islamic countries.

"Malaysia is focusing on changing the landscape of economic development in Islamic countries, making it mandatory to address the poverty problem Muslims worldwide."

He said Malaysia had also become a world leader in developing the halal industry and Islamic financial system, both of which had yielded encouraging results. — Bernama