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# Abdullah: New CM will ensure continued growth

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GEORGE TOWN: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday said he was well aware of the kind of chief minister the people of Penang wanted.

He gave an assurance that whoever was picked to succeed Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon would continue to steer Penang to greater heights.

"Your views are very much the same as mine as well as that of Koh's.

"Let me assure everyone that you will have a very good leader who will ensure the state's continuous progress," he said yesterday.

Abdullah was replying to a question during a dialogue session with the Chinese community at the Chinese Town Hall here.

Penang Teowchew Association trustee Lim Gaik Song had asked Abdullah to consider the views of the people of Penang who wanted a chief minister with three basic qualities.

Firstly, Lim said, a chief minister must be able to understand the needs and aspirations of the different communities in the state.

Secondly, she said, the candidate should be proficient in Bahasa Malaysia, English and Chinese.

Thirdly, she added, a chief minister must have a good grasp of local issues.

Lim said Koh, who had helmed the state for 18 years, had shown excellent leadership qualities.

She voiced fears over whether Koh's successor would be able to emulate the latter in being close to non-governmental organisations on the island.

The chief minister's post has become a hotly-debated issue here after Koh announced his plan to contest in a parliamentary seat.



## Criteria for CM

(According to Penang Teowchew Association trustee Lim Gaik Song)

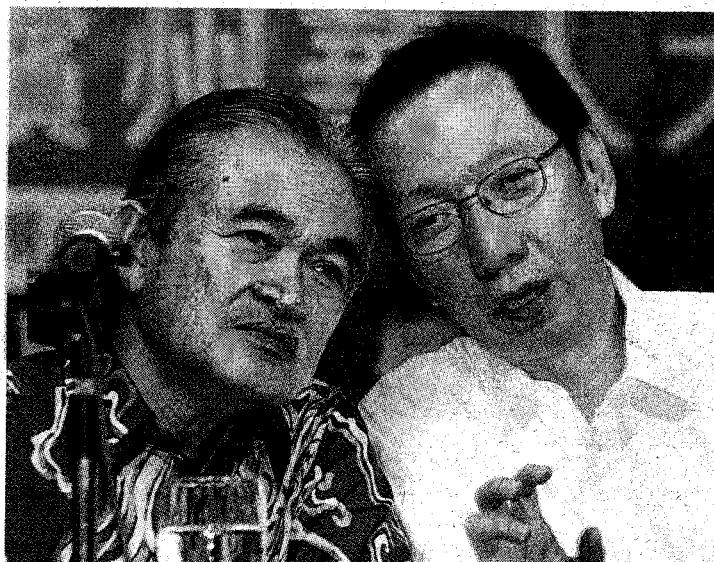
- Understands the needs of the different communities
- Proficient in Bahasa Malaysia, English and Chinese
- Has good grasp of local issues

Koh had given the names of three potential candidates to the prime minister as the preferred choice for his successor.

Although he has remained tight-lipped about who they are, speculation is rife that the three are Gerakan secretary-general Datuk Seri Chia Kwang Chye, vice-president Datuk Dr Teng Hock Nan and Health Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Lee Kah Choon.

Penang Chinese Town Hall president Tan Sri Lim Gait Tong later told reporters that he had also met Koh and asked the latter to consider the abovementioned factors before naming his successor.

Other topics brought up during the meeting with Abdullah includ-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi sharing his thoughts with Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon at a dialogue session with the Chinese community at the Chinese Town Hall in George Town yesterday.

ed security, education, the economy, social concerns and culture.

On the economy, Abdullah said he would announce more incentives for the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) development plan, similar to those for the Iskandar Development Region, the major southern economic growth corridor.

He also said Penang would continue to play a leading role under the NCER initiative.

On security, Abdullah said a bigger police presence would be felt in the state soon.

He also called on the people to play their part in fighting crime.

On education, Abdullah assured the Chinese community that the government was aware of their feelings about Science and Mathematics being taught in English.

He added that the Malay community had also raised the same

concerns. Abdullah said the Education Ministry was looking into the matter.

The policy of teaching Science and Mathematics in English was implemented in phases, starting with Year One, Form One and Lower Six students in 2003.

The initial plan was to have students answer only in English for these subjects.

"Give the policy some time to show its effectiveness. On our part, we will evaluate and look into the people's requests," he added.

On culture, Abdullah said more discussions would be held among the various communities in the country so as to further strengthen Malaysia's diversity and multi-ethnicity.

"This is our asset and we should preserve it for as long as we can," he said.