

Malaysia on target to wipe out poverty by 2010

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PUTRAJAYA: The Ninth Malaysia Plan, the mid-term review of which will be conducted in March, has already shown positive results, the prime minister said yesterday.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the third national mission to eradicate poverty and bridge socio-economic divides had reduced poverty from 5.7 per cent in 2004 to 3.5 per cent last year, according to a study by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU).

"I am very happy to state here the positive effects of the development plans and projects we have implemented for the benefit of the people. The EPU's household income survey carried out last year showed the rate of poverty had gone down, with the number of hardcore poor reduced from 1.2 per cent to 0.7 per cent.

"This means that our target to eradicate poverty by 2010 is achievable," he said at an annual gathering of 8,000 civil servants organised by the National Institute of Public Administration (Intan) at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre.

Also present were several ministers, corporate leaders, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan, Public Service director-general Tan Sri Ismail Adam and Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Musa Hassan.

Abdullah said the income gap between rural and urban areas had also been reduced from a ratio of 1:2.11 in 2004 to 1:1.99 last year. "This means that we have been able to reduce the income gap three years earlier than we targeted.

"The income gap between Bumiputera and Chinese has fallen from 1:1.64 in 2004 to 1:1.52 last year; between Bumiputera and Indians from 1:1.27 to 1:1.23, and between Indians and Chinese from 1:1.28 to 1:1.23."

Abdullah said the EPU would only finalise the survey findings in March but he expressed confidence that the figures to determine the government's level of accomplishment in implementing all five thrusts of the national mission would show positive results.

Since independence, he said, the government had been consistent in its effort to wipe out poverty and with the implementation of the New Economic Policy, the poverty level had been reduced by 60 per cent.

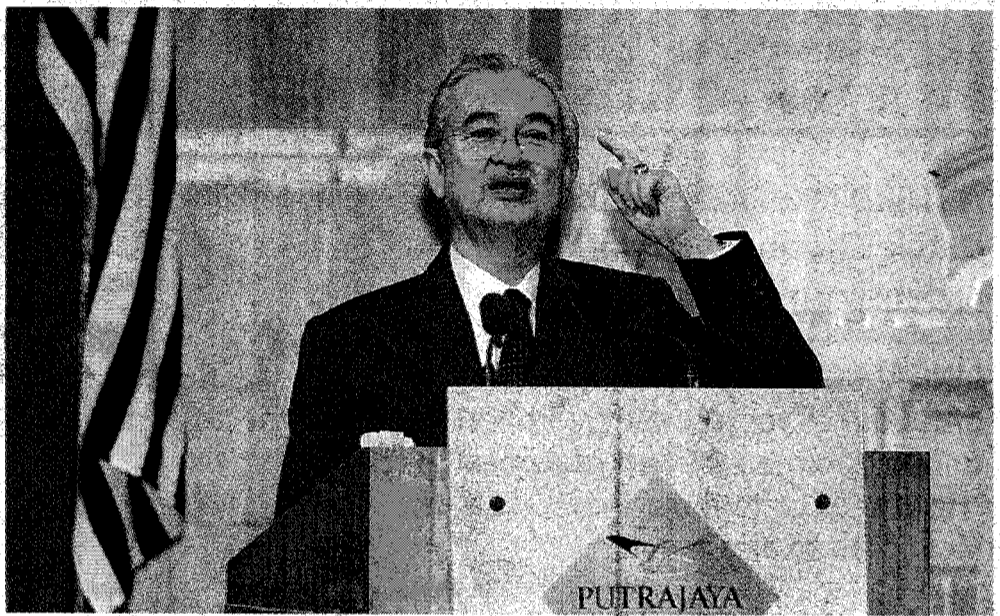
"This effort has always been our priority and we are thankful that we have succeeded. By 2010, there will be no more poor people in this country. We should be resolute in our commitment to get rid of poverty," he said.

The government has allocated RM200 billion for projects under the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

Abdullah stressed that delays by government agencies and ministries in implementing the projects would cause the people to lose out.

"It is my ardent hope that all agencies double their efforts to carry out these projects within the set timeframe. Implementation of the projects will be one of the key performance indicators for secretaries-general of ministries and heads of department.

"The performance of your ministries and departments will be measured by your success in implementing impactful projects, not



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi speaking at the annual gathering of 8,000 civil servants organised by the National Institute of Public Administration at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre yesterday.

just by your capabilities in spending 100 per cent of the allocations.

"That is old management. The projects must benefit the people."

He also told government servants that they had no option but to succeed to make sure the country's public service emerged as one of the world's best.

"Give yourselves only one option — success, not failure, not anything else but success, success and success. Give the people one service, one delivery and no wrong-door policy.

"If this is what you want to achieve, you can definitely reach what you have strived for. We also want to attract the best and attain the best for our civil service. Multi-ethnicity (in the civil service) is an asset and we want to preserve this asset."

Abdullah said fewer articles on civil servants' inefficiency and misdemeanours were published in the newspapers last year compared with 2006.

"If last year was the start to an improved public service delivery system, this year should be the year for us to attain a standard of excellence on par with the best or best in its class."

In terms of competitiveness, the prime minister said Malaysia had gained world recognition alongside some developed countries such as the United States and Japan.

The Institute of Management Development, in its 2007 World Competitiveness Year Book, placed Malaysia in eighth place in terms of competitiveness for countries with populations of more than 20 million.

Abdullah said Malaysia was placed fourth in terms of business efficiency and 10th for infrastructure last year. "We were placed at number 19 among the world's leading trading countries last year.

"This, however, should not make us complacent as other countries like China, India and Vietnam will continue to increase their level of competitiveness. We should continue our efforts to achieve a first-class standard in public service."

Use shops to boost service, cops told

PUTRAJAYA: Police can increase their presence in crowded urban areas by renting more shoplots for use as stations or beat bases, the prime minister said.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is also internal security minister, said a wider presence would enable the police to respond more rapidly to emergency calls and also boost public confidence.

"I want the police presence to be felt everywhere so that the rakyat can feel safe and confident. It will also have a deterrent effect on would-be criminals," he said yesterday at the prime minister's annual gathering with civil servants.

Some urban areas already have police stations operating out of shoplots and Abdullah said this was one way to lower the crime rate, adding that the same should be done in smaller towns.

"We should not wait for new police stations to be built. While we wait, crimes take place. It is not that the government has no money to build more police stations, but in small towns, new stations tend to be built away from where people live. We have to be near to have faster response times."

Abdullah lauded the police for attending quickly to calls. The police have set a goal of four minutes to respond to an emergency.

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