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All races to get quality opportunities, says PM

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PUTRAJAYA: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, reaffirming his commitment to learn from past mistakes, promised quality opportunities to all races in the country.

"I fully understand and realise our failures in the last general election and I will learn from them. I will not forget," said the prime minister and Barisan Nasional chairman.

"I will learn not for the sake of myself, but to make sure BN will be more formidable and able to deliver better results like what we had achieved in the 2004 general election.

"God willing, we will succeed," he said to cheers from some 30,000 people at a mass gathering organised by non-governmental organisations at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre.

Abdullah said he had created history in the country's general election.

"We won in 2004 with a record that has never been made before. I also created history when we fared badly in the last general election. This could be attributed to weaknesses and promises that were not fulfilled."

The prime minister said the government would ensure that every ethnic community got an equal share of opportunities to better itself.

This, he said, was his new



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his wife Datin Paduka Seri Jeanne Abdullah (left) waving to some of the 30,000 members of various non-governmental organisations at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre yesterday. — Picture by Ramdzan Masiam

"strategy" for the New Economic Policy. If the old strategy was focused on the equal distribution of wealth, the new strategy is to distribute quality opportunities to all races in this country."

Abdullah illustrated this policy thrust with an example of how he promoted tuition classes as an education minister.

"Students in rural areas at that time did not have the chance to produce good academic results compared with their peers in urban areas.

"They wanted scholarships but we could not afford to give them

all. Instead, I chose to give the money to teachers so that they could hold tuition for their students. A lot of students had benefited from this."

He also said the government would continue to strive to reduce the socio-economic divide among the people.

The government hoped that by 2010, no one would be listed under the hardcore poor category.

Abdullah reiterated his administration's goal of developing the agriculture and agro-based industry and his emphasis on human capital development.

Also present were Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Umno information chief Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib and Affiliation of Malaysian NGOs Which Support The Prime Minister chairman Mohd Radzi Daud.

The gathering saw singer Jamaludin Elias, also known as Nash, who is the Affiliation of NGOs media and publicity chief, performing a special song titled *Ayahanda Bangsaku*.

Another artiste Shahrizan Ahmad, known as "Abon", recited a poem dedicated to Abdullah.