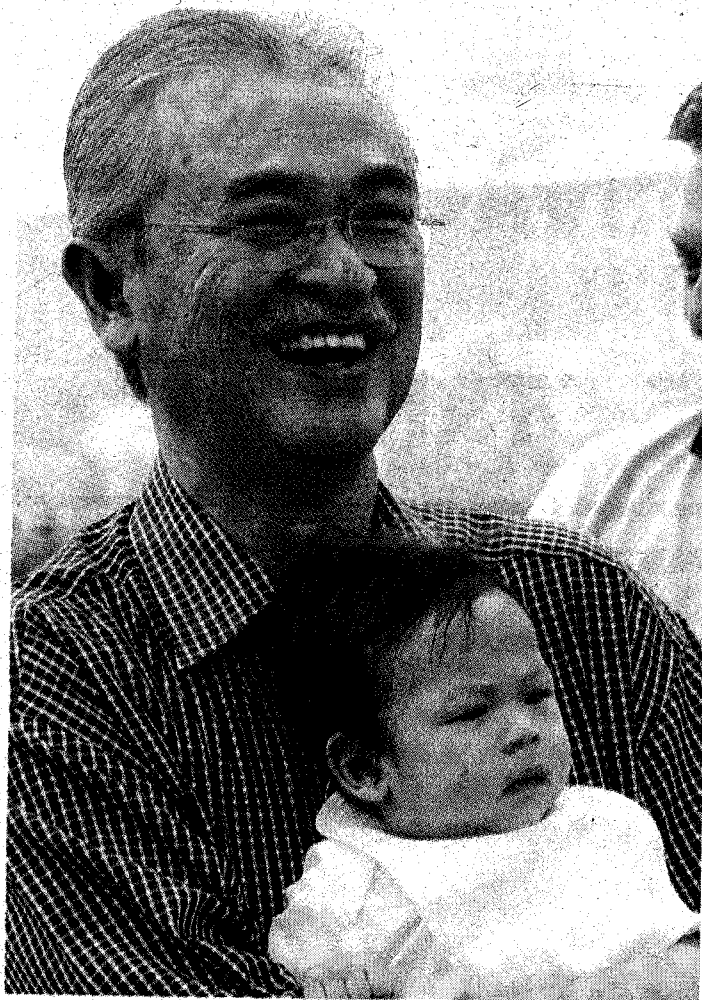


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# People have confidence in us, says Abdullah

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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi with his 4-month-old grandson Jibreil Ali Jamaluddin in their first public photo taken at Seri Perdana yesterday.

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**PUTRAJAYA:** The stock market's high closing on Friday is a sign of the people's confidence in the economy, the prime minister said, but he remained tight-lipped over when elections would be called.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the economy's strength was not a factor in calling for the general election, rather it was the people's confidence in the government regardless of good or bad times.

"There have been times when we held elections while the economy was in a bad state. What's more important is whether the rakyat has confidence in us or not.

"And I believe with the track record we've had in ruling the country; making the economy grow, eradicating poverty, providing education, abolishing school exam fees and more, Malaysian families will take these into consideration," Abdullah said yesterday.

He was speaking at a family day gathering for staff of the Prime Minister's Department at his official residence, Seri Perdana.

The Kuala Lumpur Composite Index (KLCI) on Friday breached the psychological barrier of 1,500 points to close at 1,516.22. The jump was attributed to positive market sentiment about talk

of early elections.

"This shows there is confidence in our stock market and there is confidence in our economy which is growing well," Abdullah said.

Asked whether this was motivation to call for polls soon, Abdullah said: "Never mind, just let it (KLCI) rise."

On whether elections would be held in March as widely speculated, he answered: "You just be patient."

On the DAP's decision to field candidates in seven of 13 parliamentary seats and 19 of 40 state seats in Penang, Abdullah's home state, he said he was confident Barisan Nasional would win.

"Each component party is preparing its candidates."

On the KLCI's surge due to more foreign funds, Abdullah said it was positive news as Malaysia needed foreign investments.

"Malaysia will give good returns to those who invest here because we offer a business environment that is competitive and strategic, being located in the middle of the Asean region with market access to a total population of 530 million."

Elaborating on the various projects the government has announced and implemented, such as the economic development corridors, Abdullah said the people should think carefully about who they vote for as it was a decision that would affect their future.