

PM: We will implement projects smoothly

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PUTRAJAYA: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he would give emphasis on improving the implementation system and ensure fairness in the distribution of opportunities among the communities so that there would be no more dissatisfaction.

The prime minister said he believed dissatisfaction, particularly in terms of facilities and projects, and the lack of support for Barisan Nasional in the recent elections, were connected.

"They did not object, they did not say they were not satisfied with development plans, (but) they questioned the implementation; that has been the source of dissatisfaction," he said in an interview at Seri Perdana here yesterday.

Abdullah said he would focus the next four to five years on implementing the policies and projects decided by the government.

On the need to be fair to all, he said he would ensure it would be implemented smoothly in meeting the aspirations of the people.

Priority would be given to ensure the country remained stable, peaceful and safe for all.

Even though the results of the 12th general election were not favourable to BN, Abdullah said he would make sure that the rule of law prevailed in the country.

"I shall implement and enforce the law because it is of utmost importance that the country remains peaceful and safe.

"If there is no peace and security, plans cannot be implemented smoothly and properly; this is the precondition that will enable the government to implement what it has planned to do."

On the election results, Abdullah said he accepted the people's decision in good faith.

"There must be a reason for this: that the people want to say they are not satisfied with the four years I've been leading the government, and they want changes.

"But I will implement what I can implement. I understand the people's needs.

"Maybe there have been shortcomings, weaknesses, delays or lack of fairness in the implementation of the projects promised by the government. This must be improved."

On the strong support by Umno leaders and BN component parties after calls for his resignation, Abdullah said he appreciated their show of support.

He said although the support had deteriorated compared with the 2004 election, the coalition was only eight seats short of the 148 required to achieve a two-thirds majority.

"This is still a trust, a mandate given to me. I will not shirk my re-



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sponsibilities," he said.

On the appointment of cabinet ministers, Abdullah stressed that he would not appoint former ministers who lost in the elections.

Instead, the cabinet would comprise new faces and leaders with calibre from the various races who were capable of implementing the government's vision.

Asked on the implementation of mega projects, Abdullah said they would go on as planned.

"These are federal government projects that cover all states. This is our responsibility to the states and I will not withdraw it. On the contrary, I will make sure they are implemented as well as possible."

The prime minister wanted opposition parties to be more responsible when making statements in order not to jeopardise racial harmony.

"They must be careful and not make statements to gain popularity among certain races only. Whatever they say must be done carefully."

In the 30-minute interview, he advised opposition parties in power in state governments not to allow any community to feel marginalised and to think deeply if they wanted to change policies.

"Think it over again and again. Consider what statements on the New Economic Policy mean be-

fore they are conveyed. If you do as you like, it will cause a backlash.

"This is something very important they must understand. Becoming the government is not the same as being the opposition. Both have different roles, and now they will know it is not easy or simple (to be in government)."

Commenting on the efforts by opposition parties to form coalition governments, which have shown signs of strain, Abdullah said: "This is just three parties (DAP, Parti Keadilan Rakyat and Pas). What we (BN) have is 14 parties. I believe the people are watching them closely now."

He also asked BN component parties to analyse the election results and rectify weaknesses.

"Don't be too demoralised that you feel like giving up. They (component parties that fared badly) must take proactive action to rectify the weaknesses and move on."

As for the BN candidates who won, he said they must serve the people well and pay special attention to the poor.

Abdullah said the main challenge faced by him in his first term as prime minister was understanding all the problems, especially those related to inter-racial relationships, which cropped up now and then.

"I had to ensure racial harmony was always at a good level and there was mutual respect and muhibah (goodwill)," he said.

He said the problem of inflation as a result of rising oil prices was another challenge that had to be tackled wisely to ensure the economy grew and remained strong.

"It is our economic strength that will ensure we attract investors and also the success of whatever projects we intend to implement," he said, adding that the opposition had exploited these issues related to crime for political mileage.

"They knew the people were unhappy about these things and it gave them an easy path to garner support. But these are not issues I have forgotten. They will be the top priority in my next administration."

Asked if internal dissatisfaction in Umno had been one of the causes of BN's poor performance, Abdullah said: "I admit the dropping of some candidates was a factor that caused BN's campaign to weaken."

"However, I intend to stick to what I understand, that the people have sent a message, that is for me to make the necessary corrections and ensure everything goes smoothly so that Malaysia is a safe and peaceful country for all," he added. — Bernama