

Abdullah confident 'nightmare' of 1999 won't recur

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KUALA TERENGGANU: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is confident this general election will not see a repeat of the 1999 election "nightmare" when Barisan Nasional lost Terengganu to PAS.

Abdullah said the five years the people of Terengganu were under the Opposition's administration had made them yearn for development.

"The people here have also changed and they want to see development taking place in the state.

"Barisan under the leadership of

(Mentri Besar Datuk Seri) Idris (Jusoh) has brought the changes the people here have desired," he told a press conference yesterday.

In 1999, PAS won all of the eight parliamentary seats and 28 of 32 state seats in Terengganu. Barisan, in the 2004 election, won back all of the parliamentary seats and 28 state seats except Ru Rendang, Batu Burok, Manir and Wakaf Mempelam.

The Barisan Nasional chairman was confident that even dissatisfaction among certain Umno personalities who failed to be re-nominated would not be cause Barisan to lose Terengganu again.

"I met with them (who were

dropped) today (yesterday) and they are my friends.

"I can safely say they have put aside their disappointment to work with Umno and Barisan because they too want to see progress take place in the state.

"They have assured me of their continued support and this is clear proof of their love for the party and the coalition," he said.

Sixteen incumbents were dropped in this election to make way for fresh faces, an almost 40% change in the state Barisan line-up. Among those dropped were Deputy Human Resources Minister and Marang MP Datuk Abdul Rahman Bakar.

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Abdullah rubbished PAS' allegations that some 85,000 phantom voters would be spirited in to vote in Terengganu and Kelantan on March 8, saying that people from both states would want to return to their home state to cast their votes.

"If there are phantom voters, ask PAS to set a trap or call the ghost busters to catch the ghosts," said Abdullah, who was accompanied by Datin Seri Jeanne Abdullah in Terengganu for a one-day visit.

Also present were Idris and other Barisan component leaders and some 10,000 people.

"We will bring greater development to Terengganu after the elec-

tions and I promise that I will come more often to personally see the development of the state," he said at a meet-the-people session in Pantai Batu Burok.

Abdullah said Barisan also wanted to bring progress for Kelantan but PAS had "poisoned" the minds of the people, claiming that development would only bring higher costs of living and hardship to them.

"I do not understand this mentality but all the same, the government under Barisan's stewardship wants to develop Kelantan and that is why we include the state in the East Coast Economic Region programme," he said.