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Pak Lah: Don't compare Malaysia with Singapore

PENANG: Do not compare Singapore's economy with that of Malaysia's.

It is like comparing "first-class grapes (Singapore) with first-class apples (Malaysia)," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said when addressing the Chinese community at the Penang Chinese Town Hall (PCTH) dialogue session yesterday.

"We are a population of over 20 million and we rank eighth in the

world in terms of our competitiveness.

"This is not the Government's figure and I am not telling you lies. This statistic is from an international survey.

"If I quote statistics from our own surveys, you will not believe us. Everywhere I go, the business community tells me that Malaysia is doing very well. These people are smart. You cannot fool them because they are well-read," he said, adding

that the Government had no reason to lie.

"Please trust us - we are your government. If you look at the economy, we are doing well. That is a fact proven by figures. But people still claim otherwise because of increasing prices. This is a very simplistic way of analysing the economy.

"Nobody is happy to see prices rising but this is out of our control. The question is not how to bring down prices but how to help the

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rakyat cope.

"Every country in the world is faced with rising oil prices except maybe Brunei but you cannot compare. The RM40bil oil subsidy we give out can be used to build better schools, roads, hospitals and infrastructure but we don't want to burden the people," he said, adding that education and medical treatment was also heavily subsidised by the Government.

"We subsidise even water and

electricity, yet people are angry when they hear the word 'toll'. We try to subsidise as much as possible but we still need to impose toll charges because we need to build roads," he said before thanking the Chinese community for contributing to the country's economy.

"The private sector is dominated by the Chinese and I want to say a big 'thank you' to the community for creating so many job opportunities," he said.