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Pak Lah: Ensuring equality not enough

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'Barisan committed to improving people's lot'

KEPALA BATAS: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said ensuring equality in administering Penang would not mean fairness if only the rich continued to benefit.

Taking a swipe at the new DAP-led Penang Government's pledge to be transparent and implement an open tender system, the Prime Minister said: "I have heard many statements and reports. This all sounds very good and fair and is also very nice to hear. But please remember that equality does not always mean fairness.

"Equal distribution is not necessarily fair if the fate of the underprivileged is not taken care of and their rights not defended.

"I am not just talking about bumiputras. I am also referring to the Chinese and Indian communities."

Abdullah, who was speaking at a thanksgiving dinner attended by about 2,000 people in Sungai Dua which is within the Tasek Gelugor parliamentary constituency won by Second Finance Minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yacob, said the Barisan Nasional was committed to improving the people's lot.

"Much has been said about the New Economic Policy and I want to stress that we want to eradicate poverty regardless of race, ensure equal opportunities for all races and work to improve the economy and ensure equal distribution of wealth," he said, adding that Umno representatives would play an effective role



Warm welcome: Lim greeting Abdullah at the Penang International Airport yesterday. With them are Mohammad Fairus (second from right) and Dr Ramasamy. — Bernama

as the state's Opposition.

"We will not be a silent Opposition. This is not the first time we have played this role. The formation of the shadow state executive council line-up to keep an eye on the state government is a good move.

"All the 11 state assemblymen are Umno members but they represent all Barisan component parties.

"Now they have a bigger responsibility not only to their constituents but also to be an effective Opposition in the state assembly.

"Your role is to defend the rights of all — not just the Malays. You must stay true to the Barisan spirit," he said.

"If we can do this, together we will emerge victorious in the next general election. The Barisan is still the Federal Government and we will keep all our promises in our manifesto," he pledged.

Earlier upon his arrival at the Penang International Airport, a crowd of about 300 people, who included Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng and his wife Betty Chew, greeted Abdullah.

Also present were Deputy Chief Ministers Mohammad Fairus Khairuddin and Dr P. Ramasamy, and former chief minister and state Barisan Nasional chief Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.