

THE STAR

DATE: 13 / 01 / 2008

PM: Confidence perks up bourse

The Star - 13/1/2008

Link to talk of impending polls downplayed

PUTRAJAYA: While the KL Composite Index may have closed at an all-time high of 1,521.6 points on Friday on talk of the general election, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would rather attribute the rise to confidence in the country's economic policies and flow of foreign investments.

"The rise shows there is confidence in our bourse and our economy, which is at present booming," said the Prime Minister.

"We continue to attract investments from overseas. Our ministers have been promoting Malaysia in their overseas trips."

"I always take the opportunity to meet the CEOs or managers of companies who wish to meet me when I travel overseas," Abdullah told reporters after attending the Prime Minister's Office Family Day event at his official residence Seri Perdana here yesterday.

"I have always stressed to them that any investment in Malaysia will benefit them because we offer a competitive business environment."

Asked if the local stock market could have been buoyed by speculation that the polls were just around the corner, as was usually the case with every election, Abdullah said: "Never mind. Let it (the bourse) rise."

Dismissing the notion that the rising composite index would be an indicator of the coming polls, Abdullah said there had been times when the ruling party had called for elections when the economy was in a bad shape and still won.

"The important thing is whether the *rakyat* have confidence or not in the ability of the

Barisan to govern the country," he said.

"Our long experience in governance, the achievements and success in eradicating poverty regardless of race and our doing away with academic fees to ensure that poverty was not an obstruction to our children's education - these are the things that the *rakyat* and the Malaysian family will take into account.

"We are monitoring the situation in the country to ensure that the *rakyat* receive the full benefits of any project or policy implemented," he said.

Abdullah said voters should think well before making their choice when it came to the ballot box because their decision would ultimately affect the future, development, stability and prosperity of the country.

"There will always be problems. Which country has none? But we will continue to improve and overcome any problem we may face," he said.

Abdullah added that the government chosen must bring about development to its people, such as what the Barisan Nasional coalition had done, by implementing economic growth corridors in order to bring about a fair distribution of economic opportunities for its people.

Asked if the polls would be called in March, the premier merely said: "Just be patient."

On the request by Cuepacs for an honorarium in lieu of bonus payment, Abdullah said he knew that the Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Sidek Hassan had held several discussions with the union.

"However, he has not forwarded any proposal to me," he said.