

NGOs are our eyes and ears, says Abdullah

‘They function as a check and balance’

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PUTRAJAYA, Mon. — Non-governmental organisations are “the eyes and ears” of the Government, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today, and he is willing to listen to their views and criticism.

He also said he valued their role as “watchdogs of society”.

“NGOs function as a check and balance to inform the Government about its shortcomings in the administrative system. They also help ensure that government programmes are implemented effectively,” Abdullah said in his opening remarks at a consultation session with NGOs on Budget 2005.

His comments would have been sweet music to the NGO community, some of whom have had contentious relations with the authorities in the past.

Today’s dialogue was attended by representatives from nearly 30 groups involved in social work, welfare, Orang Asli problems, caring for the disabled, corporate governance and environmental

causes. Each was given about 10 minutes to make a presentation.

“The Government I lead will continue to listen to the views and constructive criticism,” Abdullah said. “We will also accept their suggestions, those which are valid in improving the quality and effectiveness of our social programmes and the general running of the Government.”

Abdullah also announced that the definition of hardcore poverty was being re-considered.

The new definition will take into account elements such as the cost of living and the number of people in a household.

Although hardcore poverty has been reduced to about one per cent of all households nationwide, Abdullah said the Government did not want any Malaysian to be marginalised.

He said Malaysia was acknowledged as having one of the world’s best track records in poverty eradication.

At present, the hardcore poor are categorised as those with monthly household incomes of RM529 or less. This yardstick does not include other factors such as quality of life or where the family lives.



Start good habits young Abdullah showing nine-year-old Muhamed Ikhwan Rosli, a Standard Three pupil of Sekolah Kebangsaan Sultan Sulaiman 1, the right way to fasten a helmet. With him are Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Idris Jusoh and Health Minister Datuk Dr Chua Soi Lek. Abdullah launched the national-level road safety campaign in conjunction with the 2004 World Health Day in Pengkalan Budaya Pantai Batu Buruk yesterday. — NST picture by Imran Makhzan

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