

**Unity Important For Country's Development - Abdullah
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 23 (Bernama) -- Former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi expressed the hope of seeing continuous efforts are made to nurture unity, saying that it was crucial in ensuring the success of the country.

He also said that the open house tradition provided an excellent platform for the purpose, in line with the 1Malaysia vision.

"The open house, such as the Chinese New Year open house, provides us with the opportunity to meet and to come together to celebrate and strengthen our bonds of friendship," he told reporters at the Gerakan Chinese New Year open house, here.

Present were Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and wife Puan Sri Norainee Abdul Rahman as well as cabinet ministers.

Abdullah's predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad also expressed the hope that the celebration, themed "1Heart 1Dragon", would translate into a stronger unity among Barisan Nasional component parties for the sake of the country's development.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor said the presence of a large number of people at the open house showed that the people were aware of the need to unite.

MIC president Datuk G. Palanivel said he wished for more prosperity for the country in the Year of the Dragon.

Speaking in jest, Palanivel who is Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said this year would be "a good year to hold the general election."

"I hope that this will be a lucky year for us; everybody seems upbeat...this will be a good year to hold the election," he told Bernama.

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