

# Rethink on AP distribution

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** There could be changes to the way Approved Permits (APs) are distributed, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The Government might consider making these changes, he said here yesterday.

"Now that the list (of AP holders) is out, we have all the information we need.

"We are also considering the policy of the local automotive industry," he added.

Asked if the Government would consider auctioning APs, he said: "No. We have not thought about it at all."

Abdullah said the Government would review the distribution of all licences and projects to ensure it is equitable.

He said there was nothing wrong with the current policy but conceded that there were weaknesses in the implementation "which were not necessarily the responsibility of the policy-makers."

It could be that of the implementers, he added.

Abdullah said the Government needed to thoroughly study approaches that did not yield equitable distribution.

"We want to do what is better and what is best.

"If there are better approaches, we should accept them."

On the positive performance of the stock market, he attributed it to "better investor confidence."

He said he was thankful that the market yesterday went up by 1.9%, equivalent to a 17.75 index rise, following the Government's move to float the ringgit against a basket of currencies.

"*Alhamdulillah* (Thank God), the rise (in the index) can be regarded as an emergence of better confidence."

Asked why the ban on ringgit trading offshore was not lifted even though the ringgit had been de-pegged, Abdullah, who is also Finance Minister, said:

"We are looking at the situation as it is now.

"We are studying whatever development is taking place."

Abdullah said further decisions would be made based on the Government's observations.

Asked if there had been any talk with China before the Government decided on the new policy, he said:

"I have no information. I don't believe



**AMUSED:** Abdullah and Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak listening to a speaker at the Umno general assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

so. The action was taken on the basis of what China had done."

He said the Government had a certain set of options and the decision to de-peg the ringgit was one of them.

To a question asked in a lighter vein about his Santa Claus analogy to drive home the point that the Malays cannot forever expect Government aid, he

responded: "Don't you like Santa Claus?"

"It is a cute name. I used Santa Claus because his job is to give charity and presents," he said, explaining why he used the term.

Abdullah reiterated that the people must not expect the Government to act as Santa Claus forever.