

# Pak Lah to discuss effects of higher oil prices with NEAC

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will meet the National Economic Action Council soon to decide on measures to counter the negative effects arising from the global rise in oil prices.

"Hopefully, we will be able to implement measures to exert the control necessary to ensure that any negative impact of the rise will not affect our economy too much," said Abdullah, who is also the Finance Minister.

It was important for the Government to decide carefully on the right course of action for the measures to be effective, he said after attending the Home and the Internal Security ministries' joint monthly gathering here yesterday.

Abdullah was responding to reports that there might be a need for Malaysia to revise its gross domestic product forecast if the rise in oil prices continued.

"I hope we can decide soon. At this moment, we are monitoring the situation whether there will be any long-term effects on our economy.

"In the short term, we can withstand any negative impact. We have to be careful that any measure carried out will be effective in countering the situation," he said.

Abdullah also told the various agencies responsible for protecting Malaysian waters and shores to co-ordinate their efforts to effectively safeguard these areas.

"There should be more efforts to coordinate among the enforcement agencies protecting our coasts and waters because we want our fishermen to feel safe whenever they go out.

"Similarly, we also want to guarantee the safety of tourists who go boating and holidaying on our islands."

Abdullah said this when asked to comment on a proposal by Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin that an integrated enforcement team comprising sea and air surveillance be set up to curb the threat posed by pirates to fishermen.

Muhyiddin had made the

suggestion following reports that local fishermen had been paying "protection money" of between RM300 and RM400 to pirates in the Straits of Malacca.

Abdullah said he agreed with Muhyiddin over the need for such an integrated approach to rid the straits of pirates.

"We must continue to strive to overcome the weaknesses in our law enforcement so we can be more effective in protecting the fishermen.

"In fact, this is true as well for the Government and all our departments. Co-ordination and co-operation are necessary because our responsibilities seem to overlap in certain grey areas.

Earlier, in his speech, Abdullah called on the staff at both ministries to continue working together in order to maintain a peaceful and secure environment for foreign investors.

"We want to make sure that foreigners have a high level of confidence in us.

"For this to happen, our services must be of first-class standard," he said.