

# Kelantan people won't be neglected, says PM

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**KUALA KRAI:** The people of Kelantan will enjoy development regardless of whether the State is ruled by Pas or Barisan Nasional.

This is because projects under the Ninth Malaysia Plan to transform the rural areas in the east coast States were meant to benefit the people irrespective of their political beliefs, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He gave this assurance as he kicked off his State-wide visit with the opening of the RM35 million Dabong bridge here yesterday.

He said some people had questioned his decision to allocate a huge chunk of the 9MP to develop Kelantan as part of the Eastern Development Corridor.

"Their reason is that Kelantan is Pas-controlled," Abdullah explained, implying that the Opposition party would take advantage of any development taking place in Kelantan for political mileage.

"But I told these people that we must regard the rakyat of Kelantan as rakyat first.

"If they are poor, we must help them and if Umno has to do it, then Umno has to do it.

"I have announced the facilities and infrastructure projects (for Kelantan) and I have told the ministers to implement them speedily and efficiently," he said.

At a meeting with Umno members in Melor here last night, Abdullah said he was confident with the leadership of Kelantan Umno.



Abdullah reaching out to the crowd that turned up at the Sultan Ismail Petra airport yesterday to welcome him to Kelantan. — NST picture by Haris Ibrahim

"Although Kelantan Umno leaders asked me to become the chief, I think the current leadership is more than capable of leading the party in the state," he said.

He added that the co-operation between Umno leaders and corporate leaders would ensure Kelantan would benefit from Federal development projects.

Earlier, Abdullah said the projects for Kelantan would include

roads to connect remote districts, utilities such as electricity and water, as well as health and educational facilities.

One such project to benefit the people is the 310-metre Dabong bridge that spans Sungai Galas.

It is expected to cut travel time between Jeli and the Northeastern Highway to Kuala Lumpur by two-and-a-half hours.

It will also allow farmers to

transport their products from the remote district to markets in and out of the State more quickly.

In the past, light vehicles to Dabong and Jeli were loaded onto five barges to cross Sungai Galas. Lorries were forced to take the long route via Kuala Krai.

The bridge project started five years ago but construction stalled and was only completed in February.