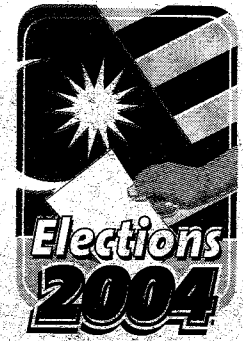


PM: Mix of old and new key to success



BY ZARINAH DAUD

KEPALA BATAS: Barisan Nasional has put together a dynamic team of candidates who can serve the people effectively, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The Prime Minister said the coalition would achieve a bigger victory in the March 21 elections because its good line-up of experienced and first-time contenders would appeal to the people.

"Introducing a good mix of old and new faces is part of the coalition's tradition and we had done it in the previous elections.

"We want the new faces to take on a new role as elected representatives because they have proven themselves as effective party workers," he said.

Abdullah said the coalition had confidence in the ability of the first-timers and all of them were willing to serve the people effectively.

"The Barisan will be stronger with these dynamic people and we can carry on with our work to bring development to the people," he said after launching the Bertam-Kepala Batas flood mitigation project here yesterday.

The Barisan has named over 220 candidates who are new faces, many of whom are below 40 and are professionals.

Asked whether fielding young faces would affect the Barisan's chances of winning a two-thirds majority, Abdullah said:

"No. I do not think so. From the



AIMING HIGHER: Abdullah promising that the Barisan government can take Malaysians to greater heights when he launched a housing project in Penang yesterday.

reports that I have received, the situation has calmed down."

He said it was normal for some to be unhappy and disappointed initially.

"But once they return to their senses, they will realise the importance of Barisan's struggle, and will unite and work hard as a team. And on polling

day, the Barisan will be strong and formidable," he added.

On whether "disgruntled" Barisan members would sabotage the elections, the Prime Minister said this group would be monitored.

"I hope this will not happen because as members, they must be loyal to the coalition.

"Nevertheless, we will win these elections because the voters will give their support to us. We have proven that the Barisan is strong and able to carry on with its agenda of progress and stability," he added.

Asked about PAS' allegation that the Barisan was using the *ulama* (religious scholars) by fielding them in the elections, Abdullah replied: "PAS dah gelabah (PAS is panicking)."

The Prime Minister said the opposition party liked to hit out at Barisan because it thought this would gain it the people's support.

"The people are now smart and they will not be hoodwinked by this type of campaigning," he added.

In his speech earlier, Abdullah said the relationship between the Government and the people was "intertwined" because both needed each other to ensure the country's progress and prosperity.

The Government, he said, must reciprocate the confidence shown by the people when they returned it to power.

"The Barisan Government is the people's biggest supporter, and we, therefore, implement a lot of projects for them to enjoy.

"*Rakyat sokong kerajaan, kerajaan sokong rakyat.* (The people support the Government; the Government supports the people). We exist because of the people," he said.

Abdullah also said the Government was careful when it planned development projects because it wanted to be sure everyone would have a fair share.