

NIP

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PM launches five-year plan to bring back values

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PUTRAJAYA: A comprehensive plan to change the "ugly Malaysian" image by promoting a values-based society with a clear sense of morals has been launched, signalling the start of a serious effort to make integrity and honesty a way of life.

Saying it was pointless to have a Malaysian society that was rich materially but devoid of moral values, ethics and integrity, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi launched the five-year National Integrity Plan (NIP) aimed at promoting an accountable and corrupt-free society.

The Prime Minister said modernisation had, to a certain extent, corroded the values system of Malaysian society.

This could be seen, among others, from the corrupt acts, lack of civic consciousness on the roads, lack of regard for the environment and public amenities and unfriendly counter service, he said.

"We want to develop a Malaysian

society that is ethical, imbued with a strong sense of right and wrong and equipped with a moral compass to show the way forward.

"Ultimately, we want Malaysians who are able to brave the challenging times ahead with fortitude and strength of character and come out tops when faced with grave problems and great obstacles," he said when launching the plan at the Putrajaya Convention Centre here yesterday.

The plan, launched less than six months after Abdullah took office, has identified five targets to be achieved between 2004 and 2008. They are to:

- REDUCE corruption, irregularities and abuse of power effectively;
- IMPROVE the public delivery system and overcome red tape;
- IMPROVE corporate governance and business ethics;
- STRENGTHEN the family institution; and
- IMPROVE the quality of life and well-being of society.

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Integrity institute set up to meet targets

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Abdullah said that for the first time, integrity was being looked at closely and in an integrated manner.

The Prime Minister said that in order to meet the targets, a National Integrity Institute (NII) has been set up to monitor and co-ordinate programmes for NIP including research, training and setting up a database on integrity and ethics.

He also announced the appointment of Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman as NII chairman, adding that the president

and board of directors would be made known soon.

The institute, he said, would be independent and would have its own office and staff.

"Some people will question the extra allocation for this purpose but we must ask ourselves whether we approve of corruption, hate it or whether we abuse our power.

"We should know that we must avoid doing this. If each one of us takes an oath and we tell ourselves (not to commit it), then it does not cost money. It depends on us," Abdullah added.

Also present were Deputy

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Cabinet ministers, Mentris Besar, Samsuddin, MPs and members of the diplomatic corps.

The Prime Minister said the Government was aware of the general perception that corruption was getting worse and that there were stories circulating on corruption cases or misappropriation of funds involving corporate figures and politicians.

"This should not happen. We must take punitive action and recently, after thorough investigations, several corporate figures, politicians and govern-

ment officials were charged with corruption.

"This shows the Government is serious in fighting corruption. The principle behind every punitive action is justice and fairness. As such, we should be fair to the accused so long as he is not proven guilty," he said.

Citing a study done two years ago in which at least 15% of some 7,000 respondents admitted to being involved in corruption, Abdullah said it was a worrying trend.

"A materialistic mentality, taking the easy way out and a desire to get rich quick is fast becoming a culture among

Malaysians," he said. "This leads to the problem of corruption and abuse of power."

The Prime Minister said he has instructed the Anti-Corruption Agency to investigate all cases without fear or favour and to speed up its work without having to sacrifice meticulousness.

He said the Government was taking several measures including instilling positive values among the people and as a start, work procedures in the civil service would be improved to reduce the possibility of corruption.