

Time to change old laws

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PORT DICKSON: Old laws and cumbersome systems will be overhauled to ensure that they do not hold up implementation of projects under the 9th Malaysia Plan.

"We wish to increase the speed (of implementation) and hope to achieve as much as we can on target," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday when closing the Permodalan Nasional Bhd World Investment Challenge 2006.

Areas that Abdullah wanted improved included procedures, laws and regulations, some of which had been in place since British rule.

He cited the 12 laws in relation to the issuance of strata titles or certificates of fitness in property development.

"It has taken longer than hoped for. People are getting impatient. Pak Lah has said it before, but still nothing is happening. But (Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong) Ka Ting has been working very hard and the law will go to Parliament for amendment," he said.

Bureaucracy has been burdened by laws which have been around for a very long time.

"It is time to look at the laws and start changing those that are an obstacle or hindrance," Abdullah said. He stressed that he was not just making another "series of promises" but that

the Government was committed to implementing the 9MP.

On the police and legal system, Abdullah said he had called on the police to further improve their response time to crime reports and in bringing cases to court, and he wanted lawyers to avoid constantly asking for postponements which caused cases to drag on.

On the Anti-Corruption Agency, Abdullah said the unit should investigate carefully and not "just drag a person to court to show that we are doing something."

On government-linked companies, the Prime Minister said it was not true that the Government had spent too much money on non-economic ventures.

"Do you think that if you go to GLCs (government-linked companies), they will give you money whenever you want? I don't think so. They look after their money very well - and are expected to do so - but there is also the question of social responsibility."

Earlier, during a dialogue session with participants of the PNB World Investment Challenge, he said that creating confidence in the local stock market was vital.

Abdullah said he wanted to see growth in the stock market, which would attract foreign direct investment.

"It is okay if it goes up slowly. We want to see a steady growth. We have reached 1,000 points (on Bursa Malaysia)

before the end of the year."

He said a special committee would also be formed to rejuvenate the real estate sector; Malaysia wanted investors to come, stay and buy property in the country.

On whether the Government would increase the civil servants' pay to raise Malaysia's competitive advantage, he said the salary scale reflected the current standard of living.

He said it was inappropriate to compare with the high salaries of workers in countries such as Japan as their standard of living was higher.

The Prime Minister emphasised that the Government had always looked after the welfare of civil servants as it was wor-

ried that they might take bribes to make ends meet.

In Kuala Lumpur, **DHARMENDER SINGH** reports that Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said the Public Works Department would start offering consultancy services to contractors and developers who have difficulties getting expert advice.

In response to the Prime Minister's call to the ministry to provide such services especially to contractors who had been awarded contracts under the 9MP, Samy Vellu said the PWD had experts in a wide range of fields and state-of-the-art software.

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