

DATE: 6 / 8 / 2008

# PM wants private sector to help needy people cope

NST- 6/8/2008

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**KUALA LIPIS:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has called on the private sector to do its part to help people cope with higher prices.

He said the government was undertaking big projects to boost the economy, on top of which the private sector should make its contribution.

He cited two examples, one of them a company in the Iskandar region in Johor which provided seven buses for public use.

"The seven buses are under the care of a mosque and the drivers are employed by a government agency. They provide free bus service to the people in the area."

The other example was a large plantation company which gave seeds for employees to grow crops and make some extra money.

Abdullah was speaking to reporters after launching the Gahai agropolitan project which comes under Risdia near here yesterday.

Abdullah suggested that shopping complexes reduce or reschedule lease payments of their tenants, particularly the small shops and kiosks.

Hypermarkets could drop parking charges for their customers.

"Such moves would help the people in some small ways," he said.

Earlier in his speech Abdullah said the government would announce more financial assistance for the poor in Budget 2009 to be tabled on Aug 29.

"At the moment, we are studying the details such as who will be eligible, the quantum and the family size involved."

Abdullah also took to task local



Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi cutting a branch of a rubber sapling to mark the launch of the Gahai agropolitan project in Kuala Lipis yesterday.

authorities and agencies for delaying the issuance of permits and licences for small businesses.

"They want to increase their income the halal way, not through the wrong means," he said of the genuine applicants.

The prime minister said numerous measures had been taken by the government to safeguard the economic welfare of the people.

He said they included a RM700 million fund for those finding difficulty in repaying housing loans. Another RM500 million has been

allocated for business expansion and the purchase of new equipment.

The prime minister was also concerned about the possibility of people not being able to go home for the festive season due to higher bus fares and transport costs.

"We can't be telling them to celebrate Hari Raya in the cities. They want to celebrate with their loved ones in their home towns."

Abdullah said he wanted the issue of higher prices to be resolved by the Public Transportation Committee as soon as possible.

"I want to do things fast to help the people but sometimes they just take time."

Present at yesterday's ceremony were Abdullah's wife Datin Paduka Seri Jeanne Abdullah, Rural and Regional Development Minister Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob, Sabah Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan, Risdia chairman Tan Sri Rahim Thamby Chik and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Sidek Hassan.