

NEW STRAITS TIMES

DATE: 12/8/2008

Junior govt officers can cut delays, says Abdullah

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PUTRAJAYA: Junior officers in government departments and agencies have been empowered to make decisions to overcome delays and bureaucracy.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said: "Decision-making must not be entirely made by someone at the top. This is important to minimise delay in giving approvals and in making decisions.

"Higher-level officers must not be too involved in micro-managing the process as this has caused delays in applications."

He said this at a press conference after chairing the first Economic Council meeting, which lasted for about four hours at the Putrajaya International Conven-

tion Centre yesterday.

Present were Finance Minister H Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yacop, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan and several ministers.

To minimise bureaucracy, Abdullah said, "the procedures must be liberalised and the forms simplified. The delays are caused because we pay too much attention to unnecessary details".

"The forms we use for services in departments are too detailed. The forms should be made simpler so that decisions can be given faster."

He also touched on the importance of Malaysia doing more to remain competitive. "We have improved but we have to achieve

more because we have the advantage in resources or subsidies. The government gives subsidies but this must not be taken for granted.

"There will come time when we no longer have that advantage or resource. We must make sure that much effort is made to achieve competitiveness. There are many countries which pay high prices for fuel but they are doing well. There is no reason why we cannot do well under those circumstances."

He added that it was important that if Malaysia was to encourage more foreign direct investments, "we must make the country more attractive — such as having good governance, peace and stability, well-trained and educated workforce, conducive environment and favourable standard of living

for its people — and have a machinery that can approve FDI applications quickly".

Earlier, in his opening remarks, he said: "Economic uncertainty and rising prices are a global phenomenon. The government alone cannot address and insulate the nation from these global forces.

"All parties, the government, the corporate sector and the rakyat have a responsibility and role to play in safeguarding the nation's prosperity."

The government, he said, would remain proactive in addressing these issues, especially for the benefit of the low- and medium-income groups.

He added the government would find ways to keep the economy growing despite a global economy that is showing signs of slowing down.

NST- 12/8/2008