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PM: Solidarity vital for stability and harmony

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi last night said he hoped that every Malaysian could give importance to solidarity.

In his 51st National Day message broadcast over the main television channels, he said united citizens were a bulwark against any threat, either from within or outside the country.

He said solidarity was the cornerstone of the country's political stability, social harmony and economic competitiveness.

In fact, the prime minister said, the world respected and held Malaysia in high regard as not many multiracial countries had people living in tolerance, peace and harmony.

"I am confident that all the trials we are facing today can be overcome if we remain united and work together with determination."

Abdullah said Malaysia had never been free of challenges and obstacles, but each had been successfully overcome.

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Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

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“We have not only successfully faced these obstacles but have gone beyond that. We have successfully developed this country to a level we can all be proud of.”

He said the country's objective was to become a developed nation in its own mould, a nation which promised a glorious life and future for each citizen, regardless of race, religion and ethnicity.

Abdullah said it was not impossible to achieve the goal if all Malaysians were of one heart and

worked together, discarding all differences and prejudices and rising as citizens with strength to face all challenges.

“No one citizen is recognised as being of a higher position than another in this nation. This nation belongs to all of us. Whether we rise or fall depends on all of us.”

The prime minister also touched on two global challenges, namely the food supply crisis and oil price hike which, he said, had brought about price increases and inflation.

He said the challenges caused worry among the people on whether the government would be able to overcome the situation. “We will tackle the problem of higher prices of goods and inflation as best we can. The government is sensitive to the burden borne by the people.”

Abdullah said the government had started several programmes to assist the people, including the social safety net programme announced in Budget 2009 on Friday, where the number of welfare aid

recipients would increase from 54,000 to 110,000 households.

He said the household income eligibility level would be raised according to regions, in line with the current poverty line income level.

The government would also implement initiatives to ensure adequate food supply at affordable prices.

Among the measures being taken were the establishment of a food stockpile, disbursement of incentives to farmers and fishermen to raise output and cultivating food crops on idle land.

Abdullah said Malaysia should be proud as the government's poverty eradication efforts has seen poverty and hardcore poverty rates decreased, while in the 2004-2007 period, the income level of urban and rural folk had also increased.

Abdullah said greater attention would be given to efforts towards the improvement of the education system, adoption of noble values like integrity and strengthening of national institutions. — Bernama