

Improve performance or lose out, says PM

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BANDAR BARU BANGI: Malaysia is on the right track to achieving developed status but the country has to be competitive in all aspects, while improving and strengthening its delivery system.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the country could not afford to remain stagnant as other countries continuously improved on their performance.

"If we do not improve, we will lose out and be left out," said the prime minister at a dinner of the Implementation Co-ordination Unit (ICU) under the Prime Minister's Department at a hotel here last night.

His speech was read by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Abdullah said an efficient delivery system would not only attract foreign investors but more importantly, hasten development, resulting in better growth.

He said although it was seldom mentioned, the role of the government in social engineering was still important.

"It (the role) covers many aspects and forms, among the most important being the distributor of wealth through affirmative actions. We have to ensure that any increase in wealth is distributed fairly.

"As wealth distributor, the government tends to give out assistance in the form of subsidies to those in need. Although that fulfils the government's moral obligation, this is not enough for survival at the global level. This approach will only cultivate a subsidy mentality."

The prime minister said as a responsible government, it realised that this practice would make the people less competitive and weak in the long term.



Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak presenting an award for excellence to the Finance Ministry which was represented by its administrative unit secretary, Omar Kaseh.

Therefore, said Abdullah, the government should take the role of wealth facilitator.

He said the desire to improve and make changes should be cultivated among groups that were lagging behind while policymakers must complement this with pro-active measures.

The prime minister, however, expressed disappointment that a study revealed an aver-

age of 85.3 per cent of contracts awarded to Bumiputeras last year ended in the hands of non-Bumiputeras.

The finding was revealed in a survey carried out last year by the Works Ministry's Entrepreneur Development division on the leakages of Bumiputera contracts.

Abdullah said the practice of giving away contracts to others was not only an obstacle to

the government's objective in developing and strengthening Bumiputera contractors but also a hindrance to achieving the Bumiputera agenda.

He said the Bumiputera agenda was important in ensuring the country's development as well as providing long-term economic stability.

"They (Bumiputera contractors) don't want to work or learn and take opportunities

provided by the government lightly."

On the ICU's role, Abdullah said it was still relevant and had become more important, especially in meeting the targets under the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

Also present were Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Sidek Hasan and ICU director-general Tan Sri Khalid Ramli.