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Beware of power-grabbers in our midst, warns PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Power-grabbers are hard at work, taking advantage of the difficult conditions to fire up the people's sentiments with false promises, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He cautioned the people against falling prey to this and urged them to be steadfast and united to overcome the impact of the surging oil and commodity prices.

"The hike in fuel and food prices is not only going to affect us now but will have a negative impact well beyond the Ninth Malaysia Plan, possibly for years after that," he said when tabling the 9MP (2006-2010) Mid-Term Review in Dewan Rakyat yesterday.



He said efforts should be focused on facing the challenges and adapting to the changes brought about by these hikes. "We should be focusing on this. We must not allow certain leaders and groups to cash in on this situation and inflame public sentiment with their false promises, to seize power outside the boundaries of

democracy purely to realise their personal agenda."

Abdullah said at a time when he and his cabinet colleagues were having weekly meetings to find a solution to reduce the people's burden, these groups were thinking of ways of to hoodwink the rakyat.

"I believe the public can tell the difference between what is right and what is false. I believe the people can evaluate the measures we have taken for them and in their interests. I believe they know we are doing our best to take care of those in the middle- and low-income groups."

Abdullah said the reality was that the oil price hike was a global phenomenon which affected all nations and was

caused by various factors.

He said one of the key factors which had led to the extreme rise in oil price at this moment in time was the geopolitical uncertainty.

"The invasion of Iraq by the United States in 2003 has crippled one of the world's key oil-producing nations and has resulted in a state of unrest in the Middle East which remains unresolved."

"The earlier military action in Afghanistan and most recently, Israel's threat to attack Iran, further exacerbated geopolitical tensions."

Besides that, he said, the high demand from countries such as China and India, along with the refusal of Opec countries to substantially increase their oil production, had also

contributed to higher oil prices.

"The situation is made worse by the action of speculators in the oil markets of international financial centres such as New York and London."

Apart from the extreme oil price increase, Abdullah said, Malaysia's economy was also affected by the state of global financial markets, which had yet to recover from the sub-prime crisis.

"In fact, many economic experts expect that this crisis may lead to a global recession, which will adversely impact our own economic prospects. The reality is that our nation faces difficult challenges caused by external factors which are beyond our control."

WHAT THEY SAY

The real test is to ensure the delivery and implementation of various promises, programmes and projects. It is crucial to plug wastage and leakage through greater transparency and efficiency.'

Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon
Gerakan acting president

The focus on agro-based entrepreneurship is most appropriate and will contribute to our balance of trade.'



Professor Dr Azimi Hamzah
head of Universiti Putra Malaysia's Centre for Extension, Entrepreneurship and Professional Advancement

The government's objective of eradicating poverty by 2010 is notable and should be supported.'

Datuk Seri Dr Fong Chan Onn
MCA vice-president

I am thankful for the special aid for the Indian community to upgrade their equity participation.'



Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu
MIC president

We should reinstate the National Economic Action Council, considering the complex problems we are facing now.'

Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir
(BN-Jerlun)

The focus on fairer distribution of wealth among races and the increase in allocation for Sabah and Sarawak shows the government is listening and taking action.'

Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamad
(BN-Pulai)