

19 OCT 1999

Abdullah-ICs

DPM BRIEFS CABINET ON OBJECTIONS TO NEW IC TOMORROW

PORT KLANG, Oct 19 (Bernama) -- Tomorrow's Cabinet meeting will hear views and objections to the inclusion of the holder's religion in the new high quality identity card issued to Malaysians since last month.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told a press conference here today that he would enlighten the cabinet on the matter based on expressed apprehension among certain quarters relating to the additional data on the new identity card.

Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, said he was monitoring feedback on grouses expressed by a segment of the people insisting that inserting such particular on the identity card was discriminatory.

"Now we can neither dispel such fear nor convince them that there is no intention to discriminate whatsoever," he said after inaugurating Kemira-Kuok Fertilizer Sdn Bhd here.

Several non-governmental religious organisations had asked the government to rethink about including a person's religion on the new high quality identity card, citing fear of possible discrimination.

Abdullah said despite his repeated assurances that there was no reason for such fear, he kept receiving protests from these NGOs, including the Jemaah Islah Malaysia and the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Sikh Consultative Council,

Since it was the cabinet itself which decided on putting the holder's religion on the new identity card, Abdullah said: "I shall refer the matter back to the cabinet for discussion."

The National Registration Department had since last month issued 100,000 high-quality identity cards which denote the holder's religion as well besides other salient particulars.

However it is not mandatory for citizens to change to the new identity card.

Abdullah was also asked about reaction to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's proposal for an East Asia Monetary Fund (EMF) to help regional economies tackle future financial crises.

"I believe many find the proposal sound especially when it is mooted by the prime minister who is highly experienced in tackling the most crippling economic crisis in the last two years," Abdullah said.

Dr Mahathir proposed the EMF in his key-note address at the East Asia economic summit in Singapore yesterday.

-- BERNAMA

AZH RYN