

21/10/1999

Only Muslims need to state religion in new IC

Lokman Mansor

THE Cabinet has decided that the inclusion of a person's religion on the new identity card (IC) issued to Malaysians will only be applicable to Muslims, Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi says.

He said with immediate effect, Malaysians of other religions do not need to have their religion stated on their identity cards.

"I hope with this decision there will no longer be any quarrel, and this issue about religion and the IC is not blown out of proportion or made a political issue with the coming general elections," Abdullah said.

He was speaking at a press conference after chairing a Barisan Nasional (BN) committee meeting on the BN 25th anniversary celebrations in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Abdullah said he briefed the Cabinet yesterday about various views and objections to the inclusion of religion in ICs.

Some non-Muslim organisations were reportedly opposed to the inclusion of religion in ICs on the grounds that it was against national integration and could lead to discrimination.

Abdullah said non-Muslims who have already been issued new ICs which state their religion, can either continue with their existing ICs or change them for new ones which do not state their religion. This can be done free of charge.

He said the need for Muslims to have their religion stated on their ICs is based on the views of the Islamic Affairs Department. It will enable them to act more swiftly against Muslims who gamble and who do not fast during Ramadan.

On the BN gathering this Sunday night to celebrate the party's 25th anniversary, Abdullah said it will be the biggest ever by a political party in Malaysia's history.

He said the venue, the National Stadium at Bukit Jalil, will be packed with the public and BN members from Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Negeri Sembilan, South Perak and West Pahang.

"If you take into account the BN gatherings which will be held simultaneously in all state capitals, it will truly be the biggest ever," Abdullah said.

He said the highlight of the night will be the speech by BN chairman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. There will also be cultural presentations, singing of patriotic songs, and poetry recitals.

"Using our telecommunications networks, the event will be viewed by the BN gatherings in all the states, and we will be able to see them. There will also be live telecast on television," Abdullah added.

He said the anniversary is very important for BN because it represents 25 years of success, and of positive changes to the country and its people.

"We are taking this opportunity to see what has happened in the last 25 years. The experience of 25 years is a rich and long experience in leadership, and if we take Umno, MCA and MIC, that is nearly 50 years," Abdullah added.

He said the Malaysian people are also interested in the celebrations because they have also been affected by the BN's policies and actions, either as a political party or the Government.

(END)

