

# Abdullah: No curbs on freedom of worship

KOTA KINABALU: Malaysia has no intention of amending its Constitution or laws to prevent non-Muslims from practising their respective faiths, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday.

He said the recent statement by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that Malaysia was an Islamic state was not "a statement of intent".

"The Prime Minister's statement was a fact and the reality that exists," Abdullah said, adding that although Islam was the country's official religion, Malaysians of other faiths were free to practice their religions.

Opening the 12th Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) congress here, he said he was aware that Dr Mahathir's statement had set off some worries but he gave an assurance that the concerns were unjustified.

"No changes are needed in our Constitution or laws in respect of this," Abdullah said.

On politics in Sabah, Abdullah told the congress there was a need to reduce bickering among the various parties so that Barisan Nasional could focus on implementing development programmes.

He said the state's political scene was about to change following Parti Bersatu Sabah's bid to rejoin Barisan.

Abdullah said the move by PBS, which left the coalition in the run-up to the October 1990 general elections, would mean more political stability in Sabah.

He said Barisan must continue to prove itself by ensuring continuous development in the state.

LDP president and Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat said the Sabah Barisan government should never cover up its faults as doing so would only be misleading the people and betraying their trust.

"We must be brave enough to admit our mistakes, rectify them and ensure they are never repeated."

Abdullah later met Sabah Umno liaison committee members headed by Datuk Musa Aman before breaking fast with them.

He returns to Kuala Lumpur today.

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